M*A*S*H

GOES TO NEW ORLEANS

RICHARD HOOKER & WILLIAM E. BUTTERWORTH

SPHERE

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A SUCCESSFUL OPERATION

'This is three days post-operative,' Dr. Fetterizzini explained. 'You'll notice that about half the sutures have been removed. I like to get some of the stitches out as soon as I can, so that the scar doesn't look like a zipper.' The screen now showed a woman, a rather chubby woman, in her late forties or early fifties. She was sitting in a chrome-and-plastic armchair in a hospital room, smoking a cigarette, wearing her jewelry and dressed in a high-collared, rather ornate dressing gown. She was also wearing a mask over her eyes. The mask was covered with sequins. The effect was that she had somehow strayed from a costume party to which she had gone dressed as Marie Antoinette. She flashed the camera a shy, perhaps even coy, little smile. Then she walked up to the camera, turned around, and, with a rather graceful gesture, hoisted her dressing gown high enough above her waist so that her ample derrière, which had just been minimized, was on display. Then she walked away from the camera. She stopped, as if someone in the room had spoken to her. When she resumed walking, she did so with a side-to-side movement of this object, reminiscent of the walk of the late Marilyn Monroe.
'I was proud of that one,' Dr. Fetterizzini's voice came out of the darkness. 'Notice the muscular control. She could never have shaken it like that before.'

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*M*A*S*H Goes to New Orleans*

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CHAPTER ONE

The day had begun, unlike any other, on the rock-bound coast of Maine. At zero six fifteen hours, Dr. John F. X. McIntyre was awakened by his wife, and immediately reached for the telephone. He called Wrong Way Napolitano at the Spruce Harbor International Airport for a weather and operational readiness report.

'We can mount the mission, Trapper,' Wrong Way said. 'Not a cloud between here and Boston.'

'And have you made sure the aircraft is in good shape? It hasn't been sabotaged?'

'I had my wife sleep in it,' Wrong Way said. 'Nobody got near it last night, I'm sure.'

'How are you sure?'

'I told her the finance company was going to repossess it,' Wrong Way said. 'With her experience in keeping the finance company from taking things back, Hawkeye wouldn't have stood a chance. Anyway, Hawkeye thinks he's one up on us.'

'How's that?'

'He called Delta Airlines in Boston yesterday and told them some nut has been making reservations in his name, and that the next time it happens, he's going to personally complain to the President. Of the United States, that is. He thought he was already talking to the president of Delta.'

'How did you find that out?'

'He wasn't really talking to the President of Delta. He just thought he was talking to the president of Delta,' Wrong Way said. Trapper John could see no reason to inquire further into Wrong Way's methods, which were often unique and sometimes illegal but invariably successful.

'I'll have him at the airport at eight,' Trapper John said.

'You really going to wrap him in a straitjacket?' Wrong Way inquired.

'It's necessary,' Trapper said. 'Over and out.'

There was a certain military flavour to the operation, which Dr. Oliver Wendell Jones had even taken to calling 'Operation Shanghai.'

Phrased in military terms, the purpose of Operation Shanghai was, 'The Removal of Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., from His Home and the Practice of Medicine for Seven Days in June.' It was a decision not entered into frivolously or lightly, but only after much secret consultation and calm recognition of the hard facts.

The crux of the problem, which – as Augustus Bedford Forrest, M.D., pointed out – could be only laid at Dr Pierce's feet, was that Mary Pierce was pregnant. The child, which would be born, according to the most careful calculations reached after the most extensive physical examination, between June second and June ninth, would be the fourth born of Benjamin Franklin and Mary Pierce.

The first two children, males, had been born while Hawkeye Pierce had been in medical school, the first while he had been taking an examination, and the second while he had been assisting in his first major chest surgery. The third child, a girl, who had been born nine months and one day after Dr. Pierce's return from service as a military surgeon with the 4077th 'Double Natural' Mobile Army Surgical Hospital in Korea, had come into this world while the father was performing emergency thoracic surgery at the East Orange, New Jersey, Veteran's Hospital.

He had not been, in other words, around when Mary had three times previously delivered. The situation was now changed. Dr Pierce was chief of surgery at the Spruce Harbor, Maine, Medical Center. He had made himself available for the appointment – in fact, shamelessly campaigned for the position – after learning that the Chief Surgeon's sole authority was determining which physicians could, and which could not, be spared from the press of their many duties to attend medical conventions.

The only impact upon the medical profession of Dr. Pierce's

appointment as chief of surgery had been the surgeon's own, regrettable, inability to accept invitations to attend any medical convention. His letters of regret to the many medical organizations always pointed out that not only was he the sole thoracic surgeon on the staff of the Finest Kind Medical Clinic and Fish Market, but also chief of surgery of the Spruce Harbor Medical Center as well. Under those circumstances, much as he would wish it otherwise, he would be unable to join his assembled brothers of the medical fraternity at a convention in Hawaii, or to participate in a national medical symposium on even such an important matter as 'Capital Gains and the Heart Surgeon.'

He had left the other minor details of operating the Spruce Harbor Medical Center, such as budget considerations, the Maternity Wing Gift Shoppe and the Coffee Niche Fund, and negotiations with the various unions, to Dr. Goofus MacDuff, who was good at that sort of thing, even if he did frequently require some assistance when removing wood splinters from the human thumb.

All this had happened before Mary Pierce visited Spearchucker Jones to announce that for some reason, she tended to throw up upon waking in the morning, and what did he think could be the matter?

Hawkeye Pierce had thereafter become quite a different man. He was often seen wandering around the hospital clutching a dog-eared paperback book with a smiling baby on the cover and muttering, 'He's a political idiot, obviously, but he *does* have some interesting insights on the pregnant female.'

It came to a head when he told Spearchucker Jones that he would, of course, be on hand to assist in the delivery room. That did it.

Spearchucker Jones's obstetrics practice was limited to two groups. He took care of his friends, and he took care of the poor. He was normally engaged in the practice of neurosurgery, a somewhat more complicated branch of medicine.

As a result of his internship, however, where Oliver Wen-

dell Jones had spent much time in the gynaecological and obstetrical ward of Charity Hospital, and afterward, when he continued his obstetrical services to a medical clinic in the slums of Northern Philadelphia while in private practice, as a neurosurgeon, he had acquired both great skill and much practice in the baby business.

Spearchucker took his problem to Mary Pierce.

'How would you like your husband to be on hand in the delivery room?' he asked.

'Not on your life,' Mary Pierce had promptly responded. 'If he's going to be in the delivery room, I'll have it out in the woods somewhere.'

'Then we have got to get rid of him,' Spearchucker said, 'Will you help?'

'Just say what and when,' Mary Pierce said.

'I'll get with Trapper John,' Spearchucker said. 'And we'll work something out.'

A secret conference was finally held in the chief of surgery's elegantly furnished office at the Spruce Harbor Medical Center with the sure knowledge that it would be the last place Hawkeye Pierce would ever show up. Present were Trapper John, Wrong Way Napolitano, Spearchucker, Duke and Big Benjy Pierce, Hawkeye's father. The latter got right to the point:

'Getting him out of town's one thing,' he said. 'Keeping him there's another.'

Some interesting proposals were considered, the most promising of which was rejected by Wrong Way who flatly refused to crash land his Piper Tri-Pacer on the Greenland Icecap with Hawkeye, a dog team and a week's rations aboard. But something, even something desperate, had to be done, in order to preserve not only the mental tranquility of Mary Pierce, but the smooth and efficient operation of the Spruce Harbor Medical Center and the Finest Kind Medical Clinic and Fish Market. Hawkeye the Prospective Papa was driving everybody, staff and patients alike, bananas.

'I hate to say it,' said Duke Forrest. 'But it looks as if our

only solution is the national convention of the TA & VD Society in New Orleans. It will be held during the week Mary's going to deliver.'

'How are you going to get Hawkeye to a TA & VD convention?' Trapper John snorted. 'He's never even been to a meeting of the County Medical Society.'

'Hawkeye will go if it's an emergency,' Duke said.

'How are you going to turn the Tonsil, Adenoid & Vas Deferens Society's convention into an emergency?' Trapper John asked, incredulously.

'What do you think Hawkeye's reaction would be if one of us were to ask him, in his role as chief of surgery, for permission to be absent for a week to attend the TA & VD convention?'

'He'd think you were crazy,' Trapper John said, simply. 'Bananas. Coo Coo.'

'Precisely,' Duke said. 'And then we suggest to him that it is his duty to go along. Our noble chief of surgery could not, in good conscience, turn one of his own cutters, temporarily bereft of his senses, loose in New Orleans with a bunch of tube snippers.'

'You're going to volunteer then?' Trapper John asked.

'*We're* going to draw straws,' Duke said. 'The loser gets to go to the TA & VD convention.'

'Gentlemen,' Spearchucker said, smiling broadly. 'The idea is brilliant. I regret only that my professional duties here will keep me from drawing a straw.'

Straws being unavailable at the moment, tongue depressors were produced, broken into various lengths, and drawn. Trapper John lost.

'What Hawkeye will do, you know,' said Big Benjy Pierce, 'is think of some way to keep Trapper John from going.'

'I hope he succeeds,' Trapper John said.

'That's very selfish of you, doctor,' Spearchucker said. 'Shame, shame.'

'It is also very likely that my wife will forbid me to go,'

Trapper John said, desperately clutching at a tongue depressor. 'Lucinda is a very jealous girl, you know.'

'Our wives are in this together,' Duke said. 'Lucinda is prepared to make that sacrifice.'

And so it came to pass that Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., F.A.C.S., began that day by packing his bag. He wore a faint, knowing smile and hummed quietly to himself. All he was going to have to do, he thought, was ride out to the Spruce Harbor International Airport and carry the bag inside. There would be no seats on Delta Airlines flight 103 terminating at Atlanta for Benjamin Franklin Pierce and John F. X. McIntyre. He had seen to that. He would then be able to carry his bag back out to the car, and, since he was already dressed for the sport, get in a quick nine holes before going to the hospital.

He had not been fooled by any of the elaborate plans, including Trapper John's mad surgeon role, to get him away from Spruce Harbor for the birth of his fourth and final child. He was going to be on hand to make sure everything went perfectly.

'Do you want me to come to the airport with you?' Mary Pierce asked.

'I wouldn't think of it, in your condition,' Hawkeye said. 'Why don't you sit down and take the weight off your ankles?'

'You really aren't going to wear your golf clothes on the plane?'

'Trapper asked me to,' Hawkeye said. 'He's a little mad, you know.'

'I made some hot chocolate,' Mary Pierce said. 'Would you like some?'

'God, no!' he said, and then noticed the faint trembling of his bride's lips in time to quickly modify his response. It came out, 'God knows there's nothing I like better than a cup of hot chocolate prepared by my wife and mother of my three and eight-ninths children.'

'I'll bring it to you,' she said. 'You can have it right in here sitting on the bed.'

Since Hawkeye Pierce rated hot chocolate right along with Scotch and 7-Up and rum Martinis, he did not think there was anything peculiar about the taste of the two swallows he remembered taking. It tasted lousy, but it always did. Drinking it, however foul it tasted, was a small enough sacrifice to make in the interests of keeping a very pregnant woman in a state of mental peace and tranquillity.

When he opened his eyes, he was lying on a stretcher, encased in a straitjacket, in the VIP lounge of Logan International Airport in Boston, Massachusetts. Looking down at him, with pity in their eyes, were two stewardesses, a steward and John Francis Xavier McIntyre, M.D.

'It's a fairly common fantasy, actually,' Trapper John announced portentously. 'Many psychotics of this type fantasize they are doctors. Most of them believe they are psychiatrists. Ludlow, here, is uncommon only in that he thinks he's a surgeon named Pierce. He's actually a fish peddler.'

'I'll kill you, McIntyre!' Hawkeye screamed.

'That's a no-no,' McIntyre said. 'You know what happens when you try to kill people. That nasty ol' needle you know where.'

'You can't get away with this!' Hawkeye said without much conviction.

'We have some nice flowers for you,' Trapper John said, bending over the stretcher and patting Hawkeye on the cheek. 'Would you like to try to sit up to see the flowers?'

He reached under Dr. Pierce's neck and jerked him into an erect position by the use of a handle provided for that purpose by the Ajax Tent, Tarpaulin & Straitjacket Company. Directly in line of his vision Hawkeye saw the flowers. They were mounted on plastic foam cut in the shape of a clover. The flowers were lilies which had been dipped in food coloring to make them green. The arrangement was familiar. Hawkeye had noticed it two days before beside the casket of Patrick J.

Murphy. It had then borne a green ribbon expressing the profound condolences of the Tedium Cove chapter of the Faithful Friends of Saint Patrick. There was a new ribbon. This one said:

'BON VOYAGE, HAWKEYE!! YOUR WIFE'

Hawkeye Pierce began to weep.

'If you would have the patient carried aboard the aircraft, I would be most grateful,' Dr. McIntyre said. The steward snapped his fingers imperiously, and two very large porters appeared. They bent to pick up the stretcher and started to carry it out the door.

'One moment, please,' Dr. McIntyre said. The stretcher bearers stopped. Trapper John picked up the Irish cloverleaf bon voyage floral arrangement and looped it around Hawkeye's neck.

'Carry on, gentlemen,' Trapper ordered, and the procession moved across the polished floors of Logan International Airport and up the stairs to a very large aircraft. In the nose of the aircraft, below the cockpit, was the area set aside for the airborn booze operation, which the copywriters had dubbed MERRY OLDE ENGLANDE IN THE SKYE because it gave the stewardesses who served as aerial waitresses an excuse to wear short skirts and frilly, square-necklined blouses. The airline had learned long ago that the way to attract the business traveler was to provide the captains of industry and commerce with a stiff snort and the opportunity to look up or down a young woman's dress.

Hawkeye Pierce was carried into the flying saloon, propped up in a sitting position and strapped into the LAIRD OF THE MANOR seat. He said nothing during the carrying-on process and simply fixed Trapper John with a curious distasteful stare while Dr. McIntyre told the steward that, in the interests of safety, it would be best to lock them both in.

After five or six minutes of start and stop maneuvers on the ground which suggested the pilot had serious doubts something this big would really fly, there was an awesome

roar from the engines, three hundred gallons of partially burned JP-4 fuel was ejected into the air and the aircraft lumbered off into the sky.

'How long do you think you can keep me wrapped up like this?' Hawkeye asked reasonably.

'You have two choices,' Trapper John said. 'You can give me your word of honor that you will not try to go back to Spruce Harbor until we get a telephone call saying that you're a father again. In which case, I will instantly unwrap you, and we can proceed to burglarize the airborne liquor locker.'

'And the other choice?'

'I have arranged for two male nurses from the Greater Gulf Coast Health Farm and Alcoholic Treatment Center to meet the plane in New Orleans,' Trapper John said. 'I understand their technique of treatment is rather interesting.'

'And what do we do if I give you my word? I mean, while we're waiting? We're not really going to the tube-clippers' convention, are we?'

'I'm afraid so,' Trapper John said. 'Well, Hawkeye?'

'Unwrap me,' Hawkeye said. 'I'll behave.'

'Word of honor?'

'Word of honor,' Hawkeye finally said.

There were, as Trapper John had promised, two large and muscular young men wearing medical whites waiting at the foot of the aircraft stairs in New Orleans.

Hawkeye, who had had four double Martinis and now appeared actually anxious to explore New Orleans, rushed down the stairs.

'You're the men from Greater Gulf Coast?' he asked.

'Yes, sir.'

'Thank God you're here,' Hawkeye said. 'The patient has escaped, and is holding the crew captive in the cockpit. He's probably trying to disguise himself as the pilot.'

'Just leave it to us, sir,' the more muscular of the two said. 'Can you give us a description?'

'He'll be the largest man in the cockpit,' Hawkeye said. 'You can't miss him.'

The two male nurses bounded purposefully up the stairs to the aircraft, and then Hawkeye and Trapper John calmly collected their luggage and caught a cab.

'The Old Royal Maison New Orleans,' Trapper John ordered.

CHAPTER TWO

Two shining Cadillac limousines drew up before the entrance to Moissan Airport in New Orleans, Louisiana, and disgorged four men who strode purposefully inside. Two of them wore the reversed collar of the clergy, and, although the other two, a long and thin gentleman in his fifties and a short and fat gentleman just past thirty, wore business suits, there was something about them, too, (notably soft leatherbound Holy Bibles clutched in soft, well-manicured hands like carpenters' hammers) that suggested an association with the spiritual.

They were, in fact, all clergymen and represented an ad hoc committee of welcome, *volunteers*, to greet still another clergymen, The Reverend C. Almsworth Cody, D.D. on his arrival in New Orleans after a long and arduous journey from the green jungles of Brazil.

The limousines had stopped in an area flanked with large and legible signs reading NO PARKING. As soon as their presence came to the attention of the policeman on duty – one Jean-Jacques Cohen – he strode, just as purposefully, to a position to where he could get a good look at the license plate of the lead limousine. It bore no official insignia of any kind, neither did it have a very low number to suggest that its owner had friends in high political places. He decided that it was just a pair of ordinary, run-of-the-mill new Cadillac limousines, and as such, violating the laws of the city of New Orleans by parking in a no-parking zone.

'Y'll get your ass outa there,' he said. 'You kin see the sign.'

The chauffeur, rather than starting the engine, reached

instead onto the floor and picked up a small green and gold sign affixed to a flat base containing a magnet. He stepped out of the car, and, with some dignity, placed the sign on the roof of the limousine where the magnet would hold it in place and then got back behind the wheel.

Officer Jean Jacques Cohen folded his arms over his massive belly and looked noncommittal. A gust of wind came along and the flag snapped briskly, so that its legend FUNERAL, could be read.

Officer Cohen was chagrined. He genuflected and then turned his attention back to the direction of traffic. Far be it from him to interfere in any way with the final rites and last ride of someone who had just recently passed from this vale of tears.

Despite the funeral flag on the limousine, the Reverend Gentleman C. Almsworth Cody, D.D., whom the reverend gentlemen were meeting was quite alive. Indeed, he was convinced that he was on the threshold of a second life and perhaps even a second youth. The Reverend Almsworth Cody, D.D., who had traveled quite alone down the narrow path of righteousness for three-quarters of a century had six months before met a woman, Margaret H. Wachauf, whom he had come to feel was the life's partner and helpmeet he had been waiting for all these years.

He suspected, in fact, a little divine intervention. Margaret H. Wachauf, R.N., had only two years before lost her husband, the late Isadore N. Wachauf, founder and president of Wachauf Industries, Ltd., a firm specializing in the recycling of metallic waste, formerly known as Izzy's Junk Yard. Mr. Wachauf had gone to meet his Maker as a result of the energy shortage. He had been standing under an electromagnetic lift supervising the loading of a fifteen-ton six-foot-square mass of compacted automobiles into a railroad car at the precise moment the Southeastern North Dakota Power Company had been forced to reduce power to its clients.

Mrs. Wachauf, understandably disturbed by the tragedy,

was wholly unequipped to step into her late husband's shoes. She had turned again to the profession she had followed most of her life, and which, indeed, she had been practicing when she met her late husband. She had met Mr. Wachauf when he had been a patient at the Rolling Hills Rest Home, following an unfortunate bout with the bottle. She had been chief of nursing at the institution and had been drawn to Mr. Wachauf who hadn't seemed to be the ordinary, run-of-the-mill lush.

She had learned that despite his business success, Mr. Wachauf was a lonely man. He was not understood by his family, and, indeed, in their eyes, had twice failed them, first by not promoting any of his many brothers to sufficiently important positions of responsibility (although he had, of course, brought them into the business at the request of his mother), and secondly by not settling down to marry any of the nice, respectable girls (many of whom knew how to keep a kosher kitchen) that his brothers and mother went to so much trouble to find for him.

After she and Izzy had eloped one night from the Rolling Hills Rest Home, Margaret H. Wachauf had gone out of her way to make peace between herself and her husband's family. She had at first thought she had met with some success when they began to call her 'Izzy's Little Schicksa' but almost before the power came back on and they could get the compacted automobiles off her husband she learned their affection had been only skin deep.

To cut short what was a long and painful story of man's inhumanity to woman, Margaret H. Wachauf, realizing that there never could be love and understanding between her late husband's family and herself, had agreed to sell them her inherited interest in Wachauf Industries, Ltd. She could not return to her previous employment at Rolling Hills Rest Home, either. The director of Rolling Hills, for some reason, actually accused her of betraying her trust by unlocking Izzy's door so they could elope. He was apparently unable to understand that dear Izzy no longer required the sauce

to get through the night, that the moment she had agreed to become his bride, Izzy had put Demon Rum behind him for all time.

Finding herself alone in the world, so to speak, with no place to go, Margaret H. Wachauf answered a classified advertisement in the newspaper:

> WANTED: Experienced R.N.; Experience as Operating Room or Chief Nurse Desired. To assume complete charge of nursing in missionary hospital in Brazil. Generous salary, living expenses, travel paid. Write Box 235.

Three weeks later, she got off the plane in Brasilia. A glowing letter of recommendation written by the director of Rolling Hills Rest Home, after Margaret told him that she was either going to go to Brazil or write a book about her experiences called *The Lush Rolling Hills*, had clinched the job for her.

She was, in fact, both a good nurse and a highly qualified one. She had been retired from the Army Nurse Corps as a lieutenant colonel after twenty years of service. Her nursing services had been about equally divided between the operating room and administrative posts, and the experience she brought with her was just what the Green Inferno Christian Medical Missionary Hospital needed.

She was also, the Reverend Almsworth Cody came quickly to believe, just what he needed. Within two weeks of her arrival, Reverend Cody had stopped calling the Gick-Miss-Em hospital 'my' hospital and started calling it 'our' hospital. More importantly, breaking a rule of long standing based on the precept that familiarity breeds contempt, he had begun to address her by her first name, or as 'my dear,' and simultaneously to suggest that she call him 'Almsy,' a privilege previously reserved to his mother.

And when it came time for his annual trip home, he arranged for Margaret to accompany him in a professional capacity. Who could better explain the needs of the hospital than the chief nurse? Besides, it was entirely possible that

once they were away from Gick-Miss-Em, Margaret would be able to see that he was more than just Gick-Miss-Em's director, that he was a man like other men.

As the Reverend Almsworth Cody waited for the others to shuffle out of the economy class cabin of flight 212, Miami International to New Orleans, he thought, somewhat pettily, that there was more room in most caskets than there was in the seats in which he and Margaret had ridden from Miami. And probably, he thought, laying a protective, possessive hand on Margaret's shoulder, a greater amount of higher-quality padding.

'You understand, don't you, my dear, why we rode back here?'

Margaret reached up at him, smiled and gently removed his hand from her shoulder. Margaret Wachauf did indeed understand. It was a matter of appearances. They were in New Orleans to present the annual budget for the Green Inferno Christian Medical Mission of San Marcos, Brazil, and they had to give every impression that Gick-Miss Em viewed the expenditure of every dollar with a truly Christian jaundiced eye. 'A Dollar's Worth of Christian Medical Missionary Endeavour for Every Dollar Contributed!' was Gick-Miss Em's well-known motto, and that dictated economy class Miami-New Orleans.

Brasilia-Miami, however, was a much longer trip, and, as Margaret had pointed out, traveling Royal Ambassador Class really represented economy. It would have been, in the final analysis, *false* economy to travel economy class all that distance, only to arrive in New Orleans too sick and fatigued to do the Lord's work before the finance committee.

Margaret, among her other attributes, had a practical head on her shoulders. She was a woman of the world, in a Christian sense, of course. Thirty minutes out of Brasilia, when the Reverend C. Almsworth Cody had been about to refuse automatically, with a polite smile, the stewardess' offer of a cocktail, Margaret had whispered in his ear that many prom-

inent medical authorities prescribed an ounce or two of alcohol when taking long trips by air.

And she had been right about that, too. He had had a very pleasant trip. After two Royal Ambassador Special Martinis and a nine course lunch, he had fallen asleep and remained asleep until Margaret shook him and told him that perhaps it would be a good idea to have a little more medicinal alcohol before they landed.

Margaret's womanly grace and charm had seen them practically zipped through Customs. The customs' officer had, in fact, offered to carry her luggage out of the customs' shed, a courteous service that the Reverend Dr. Cody had never seen offered before in his long years of doing the Lord's work in remote corners of the globe. The customs' officer, a splendid, strapping young man with a moustache, had even offered Margaret his name and telephone number, so that he could be of further service in the event she ever passed through Miami again.

But the trip from Gick-Miss-Em had been a strain on Margaret despite her splendid attempts to hide it. She had fallen asleep on the plane from Miami to New Orleans. He could tell from the way her mouth sagged open just how tired she was. Six medicinal Martinis had not been enough to keep her from feeling the strain of the trip.

Finally, Reverend Almsworth Cody and Margaret H. Wachauf made their way down the narrow aisle of the economy class compartment, passed through the curtains leading into the first class compartment and stepped out of the aircraft onto the upper platform of the passenger stairs.

The ad hoc committee of welcome was waiting at the foot of the stairs. The Reverend Cody raised his wide-brimmed plantation model Panama from his head in greeting, then took Margaret's arm and led her down the stairs.

'Jesus Christ!' said the short, fat Reverend Bosco J. Crumpett as he saw for the first time the female fellow toiler in the vineyards of the Lord whom Brother Almsworth had brought with him.

'Not here, Crumpett,' snapped the Reverend K. Elmore Miley. 'If you think it's necessary, we can hold a short thanksgiving service for their safe arrival *inside* the terminal. But not here.'

'Welcome home, Brother Cody,' said the Reverend Pierre St. Paul, 'and welcome, Sister.'

Margaret smiled wanly at him.

'We bring greetings from all our Brothers and Sisters at Gick-Miss-Em,' Reverend Cody said. Hands were offered and taken, Mrs. Wachauf was introduced to the ad hoc committee, and the Reverend Bosco J. Crumpett was dispatched to see after the luggage.

'And how are things at the Green Inferno?' the Reverend St. Paul inquired as they walked into the terminal.

'We're making progress,' Dr. Cody said solemnly. 'I think I can safely say that.'

'There is so much we could do,' Margaret Wachauf said.

'We're looking forward to seeing your slide presentation,' Reverend St. Paul said, shutting her off. 'But for now, we'll just get you settled into your hotel.'

'The hotels here are air-conditioned, aren't they?' Margaret said, with awe. So were the hotels in Brasilia, of course, but Margaret Wachauf was quite sure the welcoming committee had never been to Brasilia, and one of the items on the proposed budget was for air-conditioning the Gick-Miss-Em mission staff's quarters. If that was approved, it would mean the end of those awful window units which set up terrible drafts.

'We think you'll be comfortable,' the Reverend St. Paul said.

While the Reverend Dr. Cody had never come right out and *said* that he was living in one of the tin-walled, thatch-roofed buildings where the saved and unsaved natives of Gick-Miss-Em lived – photographs of which were furnished regularly to his sponsoring churches – neither had he found it necessary to send photographs of the quarters the staff actually occupied. This was a twenty-room masonry struc-

ture on the shores of the lake, equipped with an all-electric kitchen (stove, refrigerator, deep freeze and radar range), and all-tile bath (with sunken tub), ten window air conditioning units and a staff of sixteen, four saved and twelve who, despite a certain flair for *la cuisine Française* and Brother Cody's most dedicated efforts, had yet to open their hearts to Jesus.

The missionary committee, deeply touched by the color photographs of the tin-walled, thatch-roofed buildings in which Brother Cody labored, saving souls year after year, always saw to it that he had a few creature comforts when he visited the United States.

A hundred homes in and around New Orleans would, of course, have been open to them. Real-life missionaries, fresh from the Green Inferno were, in certain circles, a social catch of the first order. Putting them into a hotel eliminated the problem of just which missionary-fascinated ladies would get the prize, thereby enraging all the other contenders. Putting them into a hotel in the French Quarter, moreover, also served to remind the Reverend Dr. Cody that his clerical counterparts who didn't go off to the Green Inferno had their own hordes of sinners to deal with.

Furthermore, putting Brother Cody and Sister Wachauf into the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, despite that hostelry's earned reputation as the most expensive place in town, did not represent any expenditure at all. The hotel's general manager, F. Traywicke Conyers, a gentleman of exquisite grace, had recently come to Jesus himself.

Traywicke, while on a business trip to San Francisco, had been cruising the Embarcadero where he had encountered a truly handsome blond youth, lithe and tanned, who, instead of going with him to a hotel someplace, had taken him to meet the Reverend 'Buck' Wilson, founder and pastor of the God Is Love in All Forms Christian Church, Inc., which F. Traywicke Conyers learned was heavily laden with kindred souls, although somewhat short of female sopranos for the choir.

The God Is Love in All Forms Christian Church, Inc., was a new and exciting experience for Traywicke, whose previous religious affiliation had ended twenty years ago after he came to the conclusion his minister seemed to be spending an inordinate amount of time raving about the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah – and mostly those of the Sodomites.

Traywicke and the Reverend Buck Wilson had, over-night, become quite close, the result of which was that the Reverend Buck Wilson had transferred the international headquarters of the God Is Love in All Forms Christian Church, Inc., to New Orleans, where, Traywicke assured him, there was a real need for it.

There had been resistance from some members of the New Orleans Protestant Ministerial Association when the Reverend Wilson had applied for membership. It was argued by others that, if the Mackeral Snappers had gone so far as to officially greet the archbishop of Canterbury and the Greek Patriarch as 'brothers' right in Rome, the least the New Orleans Protestant Ministerial Association could do, in the interest of Christian brotherhood, would be to accept the Reverend Wilson into their company.

'Besides, if this pansy preacher can get them inside a church, it will keep them off the streets.'

Reverend Buck Wilson not only got them off the streets and into his church, but also, through the good offices of his boon companion, F. Traywicke Convers, got them into well-paying, respectable employment in the hotel and tourist industry. The Old Royal Maison New Orleans, for example, made headlines in the *Innkeepers' Monthly* with the announcement that it had shattered age-old sexual prejudices by hiring males as 'housekeeping assistants,' and that the men were actually rendering better service than the female 'maids' previously employed in such duties.

One night, F. Traywicke Convers talked shop with Reverend Buck Wilson (who had moved into Convers' apartment atop the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, pending sufficient

revenue from the God Is Love in All Forms operation to purchase a suitable parsonage) and told him that he had a normal problem, now that he was a believing Christian again. He confessed that he had been turning down convention business from religious groups for years, sometimes even rudely, because all they did was meet, pray and carry bologna sandwiches to their rooms in brown paper bags, all to the detriment of the hotel's food and booze operation.

'The cold truth of the matter, Buck dear,' Traywicke said, 'is that the black ink comes from the boozers. I'm ashamed to say that I am always delighted when I am innkeeper to the funeral directors and cemetery owners. They start lushing it up the moment they come into the lobby and keep it up for as long as they are in convention.'

'On the other hand, Traywicke,' the Reverend Wilson said, reaching for another bacon-wrapped Bon Secour Bay oyster from the 'little tray of nibbles' Traywicke always had the kitchen send up when day was done, 'I think it might also be true that those children of God who abstain from the fermented grape are probably happier in some hotel where they are not exposed to the sight of others at the sauce.'

'Buck, you have such *insight*,' Traywicke said. 'It must be a gift from God.'

'Let me talk to the guys down at the Association,' Buck said. 'I'm sure something can be worked out that will both serve God's purpose and keep the cash register tinkling.'

What evolved from that conversation was an agreement that the Old Royal Maison New Orleans would house and feed, with the compliments of the management, one visiting distinguished member of the Protestant cloth and up to three members of his *immediate* family (or two bachelor clergymen), without regard to denomination, once a month, for no more than a week. For their part, the New Orleans Protestant Ministerial Association would informally strike the Old Royal Maison New Orleans from their list of potential contributors for all other causes, and would, moreover, steer

all religious bodies bent on having a convention to other, more suitable hotels.

The Reverend Dr. Cody, Mrs. Wachauf and three members of the ad hoc welcoming committee stood just inside the door of the airport terminal waiting until the fourth member of the committee, the Reverend Bosco J. Crumpett, bearing their visitors' luggage caught up with them. Then the entourage swept out of the terminal and to the waiting limousines.

Officer Cohen, who had been keeping his eyes on things, saw the party coming out and walked quickly to the first limousine. He removed his hat and held it against his chest, over his heart, and stood at attention as a mark of respect for the dear departed's loved ones. When Dr. Cody, his hand on Margaret Wachauf's arm, walked past, Officer Cohen said, 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.'

'That's very nice of you, I'm sure,' Dr. Cody said. 'God bless you.'

Officer Jean-Jacques Cohen wasn't sure that it counted, coming from a Protestant, but it was a nice thought anyway.

When he turned from blessing Officer Cohen, the Reverend Doctor discovered he and his fellow missionary were separated. Two of the ad hoc committee were already sharing the rear seat of the first limousine with Margaret, and he was obviously expected to share the second limousine with the other two.

The chauffeur, a twenty-six-year employee of the Warley & Warley Funeral Chapel which provided the limousine as a courtesy accorded to those clergymen who habitually suggested Warley & Warley when summoned to a family who had not made the necessary, pre-need arrangements, had been keeping an eye on the airport door for his passengers to return.

He had spotted the dame first and had not taken his eyes off her from that moment. The area where the group had waited for Brother Crumpett to show up with the luggage

was lighted, in theatrical terms, from the rear by the last rays of the sun, shining through a skylight. The lady was wearing a light-blue nylon dress, suitable for traveling, because it was drip-dry. Under certain conditions, such as when the material was lighted from the rear by the afternoon sun, the translucent quality of the blue nylon was somehow modified so that it became virtually transparent.

Mrs. Wachauf, in other words, looked to the chauffeur of the Warley & Warley limousine as if she was standing, surrounded by clergymen, wearing nothing but a white brassiere, a black garter belt and a pair of bikini pants. The chauffeur was shaken from his fascination only when the door of the limousine was actually opened. He remained in a state of near shock through the baggage-loading process and completely forgot about the funeral flag on the roof until he got out of the limousine in front of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans and saw it flying snappily in the breeze coming down Rue Royale. That explained the cops on Canal Street stopping traffic for him and taking off their hats.

The flag had also been noticed by Mrs. Wachauf as she left the airport, but she didn't think it her place to inquire of her hosts.

It had also been noticed in the lobby lounge of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, an area set aside for those requiring liquid refreshments, which was served at small tables overlooking Royal Street. It was noticed specifically by one of two men sitting at a small table. He was a tall and thin chap with somewhat unruly hair. He was wearing a purple turtleneck shirt, a light green tweed sports coat and plaid knickers.

'Trapper,' he said. 'This is a very old hotel, this Old Maison whatever it is.'

'Are you speaking of the help? Maybe they've taken over the hotel workers union. I understand they have the actors' union completely in their bag.'

'No.'

'They're not used to people ordering triple Martinis,' Trap-

per John said. 'That's what made the waiter giggle. You were making him nervous.'

'What would you say if I told you this place is also a funeral home?' he asked.

'I'd say you had one or two triple Martinis too many,' Trapper said.

'And guess who's coming to the funeral?' he said.

'I'll bite,' Trapper said. 'Who?'

'It's her,' he said. 'It has to be. A set of knockers like that is unique in the annals of medical science.' He suddenly stood up, went to the glass wall and banged on it with his fist.

'Hot Lips!' he bellowed. 'Yoo hoo! Hot Lips Houlihan! Up here! It's Hawkeye and Trapper John!'

By the time John Francis Xavier McIntyre, M.D., F.A.C.S. and generally regarded as the best heart surgeon north of Boston, was able to jump to his feet, physically restrain Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., F.A.C.S. and chief of surgery of the Spruce Harbor Medical Center, and get a look out of the window himself, the chauffeur from Warley & Warley had removed the funeral flag from the roof of the limousine, and Mrs. Margaret Wachauf had already been escorted into the lower lobby of the hotel by the Reverend Bosco J. Crumpett.

All that Trapper John saw, in other words, was a small group of men, three of them wearing clerical collars, in the process of getting out of limousines and into the hotel. There was nothing to suggest a funeral, much less the incredible presence of Margaret Houlihan, late of the Army Nurse Corps. Trapper concluded that Hawkeye was hallucinating, which, under the circumstances, was more or less to be expected.

'Listen to me, you idiot,' he hissed into Hawkeye's ear. 'Do you see that huge, faggot bellboy with the angel's breath bangs?'

'It was Hot Lips, I tell you!' Hawkeye said.

'Unless you walk quietly out of here and get on that ele-

vator. I'm going to give you to that bellboy for fun and games,' Trapper John said.

'You wouldn't do that to an expectant father, would you?' Hawkeye asked, suddenly, more or less, sobering. The determined look in Trapper John's eye gave him his answer. He nodded his acceptance, marched with something approaching dignity to the elevator and allowed himself to be carried aloft.

CHAPTER THREE

At quarter past five, two waiters dressed in flowing white blouses and leather knickers swung open the doors to the Jean Lafitte Pirate's Cove Room, the largest of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans's public rooms, and a large group of elegantly gowned ladies, generally blue-haired and of ample proportions, and their gentlemen escorts, attired in ornate uniforms, complete to cocked and tasseled hats and lethal-looking swords began, after a moment's confusion at the head of the line, to file slowly and with decorum past a reception line into the Pirate's Cove.

The occasion was a reception of the New Orleans Consistory, Knights of Columbus, to welcome His Eminence John Patrick Mulcahy, titular archbishop of Swengchan, China, to the Crescent City. Archbishop Mulcahy, due to a lamentable misunderstanding between his superiors and the Democratic People's Republic of China had not been able to actually preside, physically, over his archdiocese. As a matter of fact, the last time he had been in Swengchan he had been a simple Maryknoll priest. He had left there ten minutes before the arrival of a Red Army colonel whose announced intention it was to skin Father Mulcahy and then nail his hide to the door of Saint Patrick's Cathedral.

In recent years, Archbishop Mulcahy had been on duty in the Vatican. He was a man of profound faith and high

intelligence, and possessed the charm of the Irish. These character facets had seen him rise to a position of prestige and influence within the Vatican. It was generally acknowledged that the pope himself frequently sought out Archbishop Mulcahy for his counsel, especially in matters involving the Holy Mother Church's relationship with the Americans who had been advancing more and more the heretical opinion that since they were, in effect, paying the bills, they should have more say in what was going on.

The exact nature of His Eminence's current mission in the United States had not been made public. It was known only that the papal emissary to the United States, normally stationed in Washington, was coming to New Orleans, as were an extraordinary number of North and South American bishops. The occasion was officially a conference on Catholic Charities, but the gossip was that there was much more to it than that. It was known, for example, that when the archbishop of New Orleans had met Archbishop Mulcahy at Moissan Airport, he had been handed a letter sealed in wax and embossed with the pope's own signet ring.

In any event, His Eminence, the archbishop of Swengchan, was to get the kid-gloves, red-carpet treatment. It was proposed to His Eminence that, since most of the Knights were of Irish-American extraction (despite the Italianate connotation of the name Knights of Columbus), he be presented to them at a formal reception and dinner. It was further reported that the Knights, as a result of a series of unusually successful Cadillac automobile raffles, were in a position to spend the money.

Monsignor John Joseph Clancy, chancellor of the diocese, telephoned F. Traywicke Conyers, general manager of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, and told him the sky was the limit, presuming, of course, the usual clerical discount. Conyers rose to the occasion, encouraged by his good friend, the Reverend Buck Wilson, who felt that anything which would promote a detente with Rome was good business.

At the last minute, the get-to-know-each-other welcome

reception of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society, which had been scheduled for the Jean Lafitte Pirate's Cove Room, was shifted to the fifth-floor reception room. (There was some static about that from the public affairs vice president of the TA & VD Society, one Frank Burns, M.D., but F. Traywicke Conyers reasoned that the archbishop of New Orleans was going to be around longer than some midwestern physician and simply ignored Burns's threats to have the hotel condemned by official resolution.)

F. Traywicke Conyers had gone even further. He had held a little pre-reception pep talk with his staff and pointedly reminded them that the Roman Catholics were not as advanced in their thinking as was the God Is Love in All Forms Christian Church, Inc., and that, no matter how appealing they might find some of the young clergy, they were to play it, as it were, butch.

To strike a balance between things spiritual and temporal, there were *two* ice sculptures – one of Christ on the Cross and the other of a leprechaun – on the buffet table. His Eminence, Archbishop Mulcahy, absolutely resplendant in his formal robes, most graciously accepted a Sazerac cocktail, a *specialité de la maison*, while waiting for the appointed hour to open the doors and commence the festivities.

As a matter of fact, His Eminence had three Sazerac cocktails before the doors were opened. The Very Reverend Pancho de Malaga y de Villa, His Eminence's private secretary, explained that the archbishop was basically a shy man, despite his high position, and that he frequently experienced stomach distress when about to greet large groups. The Sazerac, F. Traywicke Conyers suggested, might calm His Eminence's stomach.

Finally, the distinguished clergy, thirteen in all (the two archbishops, four bishops and one abbot, one prior and five monsignors), took up positions near the door. Behind them their immediate personal staffs were lined up.

At precisely 5:15 P.M., by F. Traywicke Conyers's usually reliable Patek Phillipe, he raised his hand, index finger

extended. Two liveried waiters placed their hands on the knobs of the double doors. Conyers dropped his hand, and the doors were swung open in unison.

Two things marred the solemn moment. Percy O'Reilley, Supreme Grand Knight of the Holy Golden Fleece, somewhat startled by the doors' sudden opening, turned in surprise. As he swung around, the tip of his sword sheath became enmeshed in the dress of Mrs. Joseph Patrick Grogarty, wife of the Deputy Assistant Supreme Grand Knight of the Holy Golden Fleece. Mrs. Grogarty's skirt was raised, and she quite understandably assumed that Aloysius Xavier Harrigan, Noble Adjutant to O'Reilley, at whom she had earlier smiled, had quite misunderstood the degree of friendship she had intended to offer. She swung her purse in a true and sure arc, belting Harrigan in the chops, and knocking his gold cockade hat askew.

'Shame on you,' she said. 'Right in front of the archbishop!'

The reverend gentlemen on the reception line managed to act as if they had seen nothing.

The second untoward incident had nothing to do with the reception. A bellboy was paging someone, and his voice, in the hush that followed the opening of the doors and the O'Reilley/Grogarty/Harrigan misunderstanding, carried into the Jean Lafitte Pirate's Cove Room.

'Hot Lips Houlihan,' the bellboy cried. 'Report to the Swamp! Hot Lips Houlihan, report to the Swamp!'

At this, the eyes of His Eminence, John Patrick Mulcahy, archbishop of Swengchan, widened, and his mouth, momentarily, fell open. He shook his head and then turned, ever so slightly, toward the door. The page call came again, more faintly now, but still distinctly, as the bellboy moved away.

The archbishop then turned around and spoke with the Very Reverend Pancho de Malaga y de Villa. 'Pancho, I want you to investigate that page,' he said. 'Find out who is responsible for it.'

'Immediately, Your Eminence,' the monsignor said.

In five minutes, the monsignor was back. He whispered discreetly into the archbishop's ear, and the archbishop nodded his familiar, friendly, noncommittal smile.

As soon as the last Knight and his lady had passed through the reception line, however, the archbishop of Swengchan turned to the archbishop of New Orleans.

'Your Eminence,' he said, 'I must beg you to excuse me for a few minutes. A matter of the most pressing personal importance has arisen. Please entertain these fine people for five or ten minutes, after which I will return, God willing.'

With that, the archbishop swept out of the room, with the monsignor at his heels.

The archbishop of New Orleans turned to Monsignor John Joseph Clancy and said, 'Jack, go with him. See if you can be of any help. And keep your ears open. It might be, after all, a long distance call from Rome.'

The archbishop and the two monsignors entered an elevator and were carried to the fifth floor.

'Suite 517, Your Eminence,' Monsignor Pancho de Malaga y de Villa said.

'Wait here, Pancho,' the archbishop said. 'You, too, Jack.'

The secretary, pledged to unquestioning obedience stood in the center of the corridor and watched as His Eminence swept down the hotel corridor and stopped before the door to suite 517. They watched him knock.

The door opened.

'I'll be goddamned!' a male voice shouted. 'You ugly mackeral snapping sonofagun you!' A very large man clad in his underwear, stepped into the hall and wrapped His Eminence in a bear hug, which, oddly, the archbishop seemed to be reciprocating.

'Hawkeye,' the man screamed. 'Get off the crapper! The cat just drug in Dago Red in the goddamn flesh!' And with that, the archbishop of Swengchan was picked up and bodily carried inside of suite 517.

Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., F.A.C.S., clad in his underwear, half of his face covered with shaving cream, came out

of the bathroom to investigate the disturbance. His eminence was set back on his feet, and John Francis Xavier McIntyre, M.D., F.A.C.S., regaining some control of his emotions, turned to an extraordinary well-equipped portable bar and began to empty a bottle of gin into a large crystal Martini mixer.

'Hello, Hawkeye,' the archbishop said warmly and just a little shyly.

'I told you,' Hawkeye said very softly, 'that if you kept your eyes open and your mouth shut, you'd get a promotion. It's good to see you, Dago Red.'

Then, suddenly, taking large strides, he advanced on the archbishop and wrapped him in his arms. Then they broke away from each other. Hawkeye returned quickly to the bathroom and came out loudly blowing his nose in a Kleenex. The archbishop reached inside the red sash girdling his waist and came out with a handkerchief and blew his nose as loudly.

'I always wondered where you kept your handkerchiefs,' Hawkeye said. 'Where do you keep your cigarettes, in your socks?'

'I don't smoke anymore, Hawkeye,' the archbishop said. 'When I did, I kept my cigarettes in the same place.'

'Here you go, Dago Red,' Trapper John said, handing His Eminence a Martini. 'Here's to Auld Lang Syne!'

The archbishop took his Martini, sniffed it and inquired, 'Do you still make them by exposing the gin for thirty seconds to the smell of an old vermouth bottle cork?' Then he raised his glass. 'To old friends, wherever they may be!'

'I'll drink to that,' Hawkeye said.

'I'm still hoping to find something you won't drink to,' the archbishop said. He tipped the glass and took a healthy swallow.

There came a knock at the door. Trapper John went to it, opened it and saw Monsignor John Joseph Clancy and Reverend Pancho de Malaga y de Villa.

'I gave at the office, fellas,' he said. 'And besides, Father Mulcahy is working this floor.'

Monsignor John Joseph Clancy tried to shoulder his way

into the room which was somewhat more difficult than he expected. Trapper John had, since his football days, picked up another twenty pounds. Clancy was stopped in his tracks.

'They're with me, Trapper,' His Eminence said. 'Let them in.'

Trapper John instantly stopped growling, smiled and put out his hand. 'How are ya?' he said. 'Any friends of Dago Red's are friends of ours.'

'Is everything all right, Your Eminence?' the Very Reverend Pancho de Malaga y de Villa asked.

'Perfectly all right,' the archbishop said. He turned to Monsignor Clancy. 'Would you be good enough to tell His Eminence that God in His mysterious way has brought me together again, after many years, with two of my dearest friends?'

'May I remind Your Eminence that two hundred people are waiting to pay their respects in the Pirate's Cove Room?'

'I'd quite forgotten,' Archbishop Mulcahy said. 'You're quite right of course.'

'May I further suggest,' Monsignor Clancy said, 'speaking both as a diocesan chancellor and as spiritual adviser to the New Orleans Consistory of the Knights of Columbus, that we would be honored to have your friends accompany you?'

The archbishop looked very thoughtful. He stood with his head slightly bowed, his hands crossed on the red girdle around his stomach, the balls of his fingers touching. His eyes were closed. His head turned slowly in the direction of Hawkeye and Trapper John. One eye opened.

'Can you guys behave?' he asked. 'Just for a couple of hours?'

Hawkeye seemed to appreciate how much Dago Red Mulcahy was asking. He did not immediately respond.

'On one condition,' he said finally.

'Which is?'

'That we get it in writing,' Hawkeye said. 'If I went home and told Wrong Way Napolitano who is the head witch doctor of the Spruce Harbor Council K of C that I got asked to

a meeting of the Knights of Columbus by their spiritual adviser, he would never believe it.'

Monsignor Clancy's left eyebrow rose a full inch.

'Excuse me, gentlemen,' Archbishop Mulcahy said. 'I haven't introduced you to one another. Dr. Pierce and Dr. McIntyre, may I present Monsignor Pancho de Malaga y de Villa and Monsignor John Joseph Clancy.'

The men shook hands, the clergy somewhat warily.

'Wait till Wrong Way hears about this,' Trapper John said. 'Two monsignors at once.'

'Wait a minute!' Hawkeye said. 'If these guys are monsignors, Dago Red, what are you?'

With exquisite Spanish courtesy and dignity, Monsignor Malaga y de Villa said, 'It is my great honor to serve as private secretary to His Eminence, who is archbishop of Swengchan.'

Hawkeye and Trapper exchanged shocked looks. And then, suddenly, they were both on their knees in front of the archbishop, arms extended over their heads, bowing in the manner of devout Moslems. They bowed far enough forward, in other words, so their foreheads touched the carpet.

As they went down for the third dip and as the reverend monsignors stood with their mouths open, His Eminence very carefully tilted his Martini glass so that its contents ran down their necks.

'When I said behave,' the archbishop said, 'I meant behave. And the next time you call me Dago Red in public, I'll make you eat the glass. Understood?'

Dr. Pierce and Dr. McIntyre assumed the position of altar boys at prayer, kneeling erect, their hands folded piously in front of them.

'Understood, Your Eminence!' they said in unison.

'Pancho,' the archbishop said, 'I'm going back to the reception with Monsignor Clancy. You stay here with these two. Make sure they get nothing else to drink, and that when they get dressed, they look like respectable members of the medical profession. Then you bring them down to the reception.'

'Very well, Your Eminence,' the monsignor said.

The archbishop and Monsignor Clancy went to leave the room. At the door, the archbishop turned around. 'Shape up or ship out, you two,' he said. 'Understood?'

He was gone before they had a chance to reply.

The last time Hawkeye Pierce, Trapper John McIntyre and Father John Patrick Mulcahy had been together was about two years after the Chinese Communist colonel had failed to skin Mulcahy alive and nail his hide to the doors of the Swengchan cathedral.

They had met in the Land of the Morning Calm, more popularly known as Frozen Chosen, and identified by the U.S. Army as South Korea, Republic of. They had all been assigned to the 4077th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, known to its inmates and the Eighth Army Units it served as the 'Double Natural' MASH.

Chaplain (Captain) Mulcahy, John P., had been sent to the 4077th as a replacement. The stress and strain of his religio-military duties had been too much for his predecessor, a Southern Baptist clergyman, Chaplain (Captain) Abbot, Samuel J. The two had met in the office of the Eighth Army chaplain, an Episcopalian, Chaplain (Colonel) Wattingham, Charles Frederick.

Chaplain Abbot had been with Chaplain Wattingham for the purely military purpose of swearing out court-martial charges against two surgeons of the 4077th MASH, Captains Benjamin Franklin Pierce and John Francis Xavier McIntyre.

'Perhaps I should come back later, sir,' Father Mulcahy had said.

'I think you should see this,' Chaplain Wattingham said. 'Since you are about to go to the 4077th MASH.'

'Yes, sir,' Father Mulcahy said. Chaplain (Colonel) Wattingham handed him the prescribed army form for court-martial charges, which had been neatly typed out, and which Chaplain (Captain) Abbot had just signed.

Even then, Father Mulcahy had been a priest for a long

time and thought that he had either seen, or heard, everything. But what Chaplain Abbot formally charged here was new.

Captains Pierce and McIntyre, with malice aforethought, had, at approximately 2300 hours, 13 January 1952, gone to the quarters of Chaplain (Captain) Abbot and assaulted him in the following manner: They had wrapped and trussed Chaplain (Captain) Abbot with surgical tape and forcibly and against his will transported him to an area near the 4077th MASH's helicopter landing pad, where he was placed against a wooden structure having a vertical base and a horizontal cross-member and strapped to it with surgical tape. The wooden structure was similar in size and construction to the device on which Our Lord and Saviour was crucified at Golgotha.

Captains Pierce and McIntyre then had gathered around the base of the cross a large pile of combustible material, largely scrap wood, but also including old copies of the Stars and Stripes, a complete set of army regulations and the mattress from Chaplain (Captain) Abbot's cot, which they cut open and tore to expose the inflammable cotton stuffing. They had proceeded to saturate this flammable material with the contents of a five-gallon jerry can marked GASOLINE. Captain Pierce had then struck a match. It had only been the timely arrival of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Blake, Medical Corps, Commanding Officer of the 4077th MASH which had prevented the named accused of murdering by incineration Chaplain (Captain) Abbot.

All these actions represented both conduct prejudical to good military order and discipline and unbecoming to officers and gentlemen.

'What do you think about that, Chaplain?' Chaplain Abbot asked, with just a touch of righteous indignation.

'It's terrible,' Chaplain (Captain) Mulcahy said. 'Just terrible.'

'And you just put your mind at rest, Chaplain,' Chaplain (Colonel) Wattingham said soothingly to Chaplain Abbot.

'You just leave everything to me, and have a nice flight home.'

Two very large enlisted men wearing Red Cross arm bands came into the office and escorted Chaplain Abbot away.'

'A couple of months in a rest home, and he'll probably be as good as new,' Wattingham said. 'Poor chap. The strain was just too much for him.'

'I daresay,' Father Mulcahy agreed.

'The Eighth Army psychiatrist tells me it's almost a classic case of paranoia,' Chaplain Wattingham went on. 'He's going to do a paper on him.'

'You mean . . . it didn't happen. It's just a . . .'

'Precisely. Poor Chaplain Abbot simply wasn't up to facing what must be faced every day in a MASH. He was pushed over the edge, so to speak.' Father Mulcahy could think of nothing to say. 'You didn't really think for a minute, did you, Father, that two army surgeons would actually tie a chaplain to a cross and then try to burn him . . . like Joan of Arc . . . at the stake?'

'Of course not,' Father Mulcahy said, immensely relieved.

'I wish you good luck in your new assignment,' Chaplain (Colonel) Wattingham said. He put out his hand. The interview was over.

An hour later, Father John Patrick Mulcahy descended literally, on the 4077th MASH. He was flown from Eighth Army Headquarters in Seoul by helicopter above the frozen rice paddies and around the steep mountains to the rice paddy which had been drained, with partial success, for the 4077th MASH. His initial impression, as the helicopter descended, was a good one. The presence of God had not been forgotten. A large wooden cross had been erected on a hillside near the helicopter landing pad.

But as the helicopter touched down, Father Mulcahy noticed what appeared to be windings of white surgical tape on the horizontal member of the cross, and, around its base, what appeared to be a pile of discarded newspapers and a torn up mattress.

A short, balding soldier, a corporal, wearing an army knit

cap and GI wire-rimmed glasses, ducked beneath the rotor arc and opened the helicopter's door.

'Welcome to the 4077th MASH,' he said. 'Everybody but me's in surgery, so this is all the welcome committee you get.'

'Thank you for meeting me,' Father Mulcahy said. 'About that cross, young man . . .'

'Oh,' the corporal said, 'that's where Hawkeye and Trapper John were going to burn Shaking Sammy, our last chaplain. Colonel Blake wouldn't let them.' His disappointment was obvious.

CHAPTER FOUR

Chaplain (Captain) John Patrick Mulcahy met Captains Benjamin Franklin Pierce and John Francis Xavier McIntyre about ten minutes later, but he didn't get to talk to them, or even see much of their faces (because of their surgical masks), until eight hours later.

The eight hours, however, were enough time for Father Mulcahy to come to the conclusion that whatever else they might be, Pierce and McIntyre were fine surgeons. Mulcahy was not exactly a stranger to a hospital. He had done his time as a chaplain in New York City's Bellevue Hospital, and he had seen military surgeons at work in China. But he had never before seen so much major emergency surgery performed on so many by so few. The six tables of the operating suite had seen a steady march of stretcher bearers carrying in the wounded, and carrying them out again after surgery.

Almost all those who reached the operating room alive left it alive, including half a dozen young men whom Mulcahy, based on his previous experience, had felt were about to meet their Maker, and to whom he had administered the last rites of his church.

And then, almost suddenly, the frantic activity in the operating suite died off. That day's product of war had been

cared for. Mulcahy made his way to the post-operative ward, where nurses and medical corpsmen hovered around the beds of the men who had just undergone surgery. At the far corner of the post-operative ward, Mulcahy's eye fell on the two surgeons he had heard the others call 'Trapper' and 'Hawkeye.' Hawkeye was sitting on a stool beside a cot bearing a young man wrapped in bandages. Trapper was standing beside him. Tears ran shamelessly down Hawkeye's cheeks. As Father Mulcahy watched, Trapper bent over and pulled the sheet over the face of the young man on the cot. Then he sort of pulled Hawkeye to his feet and guided him out of the ward.

Mulcahy stayed another fifteen minutes in the post-operative ward, doing what he could for the other patients, and then he set out after the two young surgeons. There was no question in his mind that they needed the services of a chaplain, too.

He was directed to a squad tent erected somewhat apart from the other tents. There was no reply to his knock at the plywood door, so he pushed it open and stepped inside. It was somewhat untidy. He was soon to learn that it was called, with some precision, the Swamp. It contained three cots, one of them neatly made up and stuck in a far corner. The other two cots had apparently never been made. There were rude desks (plywood and 2 X 4s), footlockers, a once ornate armchair with leaking stuffing, an oil-fueled Cannon heater and three folding chairs.

Only Pierce and McIntyre were in the tent. They were sitting, shoulders hunched, around the Cannon heater. Mulcahy recognized the symptoms of fatigue and depression and wasn't at all surprised when McIntyre finally looked up at him and snarled, 'What the hell do you want, Holy Joe?'

'Is there anything I can do for you?' Father Mulcahy asked.

'Not unless you've got a quart of gin in your little black bag,' Hawkeye said. 'Don't let the doorknob hit you on the ass on your way out.'

'We have an arrangement around here, pal,' Trapper said. 'We don't take up collections, and the religious fraternity stays out of the Swamp.'

Father Mulcahy backed out of the tent. In five minutes he was back, having found his luggage where the corporal had put it on his arrival. He didn't knock this time. He just walked in the tent and to the little table beside the Cannon heater.

'I didn't have any gin,' he said. 'I'll see about getting some. I hope this will serve for the time being.' He set a full quart bottle of Courvoisier Cognac on the table and twisted out its cork. Hawkeye looked at him, and then at the bottle, and then back at him. Then he reached for the bottle, put it to his lips and took a very large swallow before passing it to Trapper who took an even larger swallow. Then Trapper handed the bottle to Mulcahy who took a healthy belt himself.

'If you promise not to pray out loud, or make other religious-type noises, you can sit down,' Hawkeye said.

Father Mulcahy sat down on one of the folding chairs and handed the brandy bottle back to Hawkeye. Another round was drunk in silence.

'What's your patient survival rate?' Mulcahy asked, finally.

'Not bad,' Hawkeye said, after considering the question for a moment. 'Considering the skill and experience level of the surgeons, and the fact that we're routinely performing major emergency surgery here in a tent that would have most general hospitals in hysterics.'

'What's the survival rate?' Mulcahy repeated.

'We don't have time to make neat little charts, for God's sake,' Trapper said.

'Over ninety percent. Ninety-five percent, maybe,' Hawkeye said.

'You writing a book, or what? Drink your booze and shut up,' Trapper said.

Father Mulcahy did as he was ordered. He was a practical man of God. While he didn't exactly doubt the power of

prayer, he had decided that since God had so far declined to honor the prayers of the thousands, perhaps millions, praying for an end to the Korean War, it was unlikely that He would suddenly do so simply because Father John Patrick Mulcahy got on his knees and joined the others.

On the other hand, since He had arranged for Mulcahy to be transformed from a Maryknoll priest in clerical collar and vestments on missionary duty in China to an army captain in baggy fatigues, He had probably had a good reason. Mulcahy thought he saw that reason: his drinking companions. They were obviously among the very few people in the Eighth United States Army, Korea, able by training and assigned duty, to do anything at all to alleviate the bloody horror of the war. They were dedicated to saving life while just about everybody else was dedicated to taking it.

Mulcahy had long before come to believe that every man needs something to lean on. In his case, he had his faith. Hawkeye Pierce and Trapper John McIntyre apparently had little, if any, faith of their own. Mulcahy immediately and clearly saw it as his duty to do what he could to give these two the support and solace and encouragement needed to keep them fit to meet their responsibilities. What they needed was a friend to turn to, and Mulcahy was determined to be that friend. If that meant sitting around a Cannon stove with them and swigging brandy from a bottle, so be it.

Philosophically, and theologically, it all seemed quite clear. Putting it into practice, however, proved to be somewhat more difficult and personally disturbing than Father Mulcahy had thought possible.

It began the next morning. For the first time in his life, Father Mulcahy awoke in a bed with no idea where he was or how he got there. It was a memory which still pained him twenty years later. He woke to find the bespectacled corporal who had met him at the helicopter pad gently pushing his shoulder.

'Chaplain,' the corporal said. 'Wake up, chaplain!'

'Oh, good morning,' Father Mulcahy said. It was painful,

just talking. His eyes hurt and his mouth was dry, and for a moment he thought he was paralyzed. He was unable to sit up.

'The colonel would like to see you, Sir,' the corporal said.

'Yes, of course,' Father Mulcahy said. 'Where is he?'

'Right here, chaplain,' a soft, midwestern voice said. Father Mulcahy was able to turn his head enough to see a tall officer, wearing the insignia of a lieutenant colonel of the medical corps standing by the side of the bed with his hands on his hips. 'You want to tell me what happened?'

'I don't seem to be able to move,' Mulcahy said.

'You seem to be strapped to the cot with surgical bandage,' the colonel said, dryly. 'You have any idea how that happened?'

Mulcahy was able to raise his head enough to see the corporal wielding surgical scissors and cutting him loose.

'The last I seem to recall,' Father Mulcahy said, 'I was having a sociable drink with Doctors Pierce and McIntyre.'

'There is no such thing as having a sociable drink with Doctors Pierce and McIntyre,' the colonel said.

The corporal had cut through enough of the gauze bandage to permit Father Mulcahy to raise his shoulders. It was enough to see that he had been wrapped in such a manner to permit his hands to grasp, but not let go of, two papier-mâché lilies. A bishop's *cappa magna*, fashioned with some skill from cardboard, was resting on his stomach. At the foot of the cot, two devices normally used to hold bottles of blood or glucose for intravenous injections had been put into service as candelabra. Candles flickered on them. Mulcahy turned his head and saw two more candelabra at the head of the cot. On a footlocker placed parallel to the cot, a row of GI candles flickered.

'Outside the tent, Chaplain,' the colonel said, 'is a sign reading "This Way to the Roman Catacombs. See a pickled priest for only fifty cents." '

'Oh, my!' Father Mulcahy said.

'I don't know how much solace this will be,' the colonel said. 'But they crucified our last chaplain.'

'Yes, I heard,' Father Mulcahy said.

'Well, when you feel up to it, Chaplain,' the colonel said. 'Come by the office and sign the court-martial charges.' He turned and started out the door.

'Colonel!' Mulcahy called.

'Yes, Chaplain?'

'Do I have any choice in the matter? I mean, am I required to bring charges?'

'You mean, you don't want to?'

'I watched Doctors Pierce and McIntyre in the surgical ward yesterday,' Father Mulcahy said. 'It looked to me as if they would be very hard to replace.'

'Yes, Chaplain, they would,' the colonel said.

'And if I hadn't . . . helped myself . . . to so much brandy, I wouldn't have fallen asleep.'

'It wasn't the brandy what done you in, Chaplain,' the corporal offered, helpfully. 'It was the gallon of Dago Red you drunk when the home brew was all gone.'

'You mean, we drank the sacramental wine used by chaplains, Protestant and/or Catholic?'

'Only after you ran out of home brew,' the corporal explained. 'It was like an emergency.'

Father Mulcahy gathered what dignity he could and said, 'Colonel, I decline, under the circumstances, to press any charges.'

'Very well, Chaplain,' the colonel said formally. 'That is your prerogative.' He walked again to the tent door and then turned around. 'Welcome aboard, Padre. You may be just what we need around here.'

Chaplain Mulcahy was finally freed from the last of the surgical bandage in which he had been mummified. He tried to stand up and found this uncomfortable. Moreover, his head ached, his eyes burned and his mouth was dry.

'This is for you,' the corporal said. He handed him a capped flask from the hospital pharmacy. There was a standard

army label on it, reading 'PATIENT: *Chaplain Mulcahy. For dizziness, headache, burning eyes, indigestion and dryness of mouth. Six ounces every hour. B.F. Pierce, M.D., Captain, MC.*'

Chaplain Mulcahy, in desperation, drank down the odd-colored substance. It was obviously, he decided, one of the new miracle drugs, skillfully flavored to taste not unlike a Sazerac cocktail. Within moments, his thirst was gone, his head no longer ached and he felt an aura of well being spreading from the area of his stomach.

'Well, now,' he said. 'I must say that makes me feel a little better.'

'Hawkeye must like you,' the corporal said.

'Why do you say that?'

'He only prescribes Sazeracs for people he likes,' the corporal said. 'When Major Burns had the flu, Hawkeye prescribed castor oil and mustard plasters.'

'Who is Major Burns?'

'He's Hot Lips' boyfriend,' the corporal said. 'You were in his bed.'

'Well, where did he sleep?'

'With Hot Lips,' the corporal said. 'My name is Radar O'Reilly,' the corporal added. 'If you need anything, Padre, just yell. Any friend of Hawkeye's is a friend of mine.'

'That's very nice of you, Radar,' Mulcahy said. 'O'Reilly sounds Irish. Are you by any chance Catholic?'

'I used to be,' O'Reilly said. 'Trapper John's got me into Existential Buddhism. Well, see you around.'

Chaplain Mulcahy sank back down on the cot. It would not hurt, he thought, to rest his eyes for just a moment or two. But at the moment his head touched the pillow, he heard the unmistakable fluckata-fluckata-fluckata sound of a helicopter. He jumped to his feet and made his way to the door of the tent. An ambulance helicopter was about to touch down at the landing pad. He looked around the room for his little black bag, grabbed it and ran toward the landing pad.

In the operating room that day, Father Mulcahy met Frank

Burns, major, Medical Corps, and Margaret Houlihan, major, Army Nurse Corps. Nurse Houlihan was constantly at the side of either Hawkeye or Trapper as they bent over their operating tables, and it was obvious that she was a surgical nurse of great skill. Major Burns, on the other hand, seemed to be doing everything in the operating room but wielding a scalpel.

Both Hawkeye and Trapper John seemed a little surprised to see Father Mulcahy in surgical whites, making himself useful, but neither offered comment. Hawkeye addressed him directly only after the last surgical patient had been carried out of the operating room.

'You mentioned the survival rate last night,' he said.

'Yes, I did.'

'Well, it was one hundred percent today,' Hawkeye said. 'So maybe you better stick around, Dago Red.'

The two men looked at each other.

'Whatever you say, Hawkeye,' Father Mulcahy said.

'Let's go to the Swamp for a little pre-dinner libation,' Trapper John said and draped an arm around Mulcahy's shoulder. 'I want to tell you all about Existential Buddhism.'

Father Mulcahy never again attempted to match Hawkeye and Trapper John drink for drink, and, tit for tat, they never again mummified him. There was a theological stand off between Catholicism and Existential Buddhism, which faith Mulcahy came to believe had been recently invented by Trapper John as a means to while away the lonesome Korean hours in argument with Major Frank Burns.

Major Burns, Mulcahy quickly learned, seemed to be a completely lost soul whenever Major Margaret Houlihan was not available to entertain him in her tent. Whenever Major Houlihan was busy (she was, by virtue of her rank, chief nurse, and had many administrative responsibilities), Major Frank Burns would wander disconsolately back to the Swamp to talk of his beloved wife, his precious children, his thriving practice of pediatric medicine and his Intermediate Living Bible class of the First Community Christian Church – all of

which he had left behind in Hillandale Estates, Ohio, when he had gone off weeping and beating his chest to answer the draft board's call to service as a military surgeon.

Hawkeye and Trapper John regarded Frank Burns with a piquant mixture of loathing and amusement. They were amused that the army had classified Burns, whose scalpel-wielding experience was limited to boil lancing of the pre-adolescent, as a surgeon. They loathed him for interpreting the army's obvious error as formal permission to enter a real operating room in the peculiar costume of the genuine practitioners of the art and science of surgery.

Despite his best efforts, and even a little prayer, Father Mulcahy found that he was almost in total agreement with Trapper John McIntyre's pronouncement that Major Frank Burns should not be called a horse's ass. It was unfair to the solid-hoofed perissodactyl quadrupeds, *Equus caballus*, who exhibited a much higher level of intelligence and character and were far more useful to mankind generally.

When time and circumstance permitted, Hawkeye and Trapper John devoted some attention to Frank Burns. To further his education, for example, they arranged to have shipped to him, collect, the six-volume set of *The Layman's Guide to Medicine*, featuring twelve full-color photographs of the body's organs, suitable for framing, which they found advertised for only $39.95 in *Buxom Gals magazine*.

On another occasion, when Major Burns required the professional services of Painless Waldowski, dental surgeon of the 4077th MASH, they arranged for the procedure to be broadcast over the hospital public address system, telling Colonel Blake afterwards that it seemed only fair to do so, to destroy the false belief held by most laymen that medical practitioners were above pleading for relief from pain, and to show them that Frank Burns, M.D., screamed and hollered just like an ordinary mortal when his bicuspids required drilling.

In the twenty years that had passed, since His Eminence John Patrick Mulcahy, archbishop of Swengchan, had last

seen Hawkeye and Trapper John, he had thought of them often, wondering what had happened to them after they had left the 4077th MASH and the Land of the Morning Calm, a.k.a., South Korea, Republic of. He would look forward, once the Knights of Columbus reception was over, to being alone with them, to satisfy his understandable curiosity about what had happened to his old friends.

CHAPTER FIVE

Immediately after seeing that all the Knights of Columbus and their ladies had passed through the reception line in the Jean Lafitte Pirate's Cove Room, F. Traywicke Conyers had discreetly made his departure. From his past experience in affairs of this nature, he felt warmly confident that the reception, if nothing else, would be a financial success for the hotel.

Not only did the Knights of Columbus and their ladies have a well earned reputation among hoteliers for socking away the sauce in quantities exceeded only by funeral directors and cemetery owners, but Conyers had spotted in the midst of this group of Knights, decked out in full regalia, complete to sword, tricornered hat and flaming red sash, one of the hotel's best customers, booze-wise, Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux. Mr. Chevaux, known widely as 'Horsey' Chevaux, was chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the Chevaux Oil Production & Development Company.

Eight generations of the de la Chevaux family had lived in Louisiana on Bayou Perdu. For seven of the eight generations the family manse had been an unpainted shack suspended precariously above the brackish swamp, from which the family had eked out an existence by trapping muskrat and otter, distilling corn whiskey and poaching deer. In the early 1950s, the state of Louisiana had acquired, by right of

eminent domain, a 300 foot-wide-swath through the de la Chevaux property for the construction of a superhighway.

The only unusual thing about that had been the discovery when searching for the title to the land, that the de la Chevaux family property, comprising some 16,000 acres (all of it described as coastal marshland, unfit for agricultural purposes), had come down to the present owner intact from the original land grant of his Most Catholic Majesty, Louis XIV, King of France, in 1714.

At the condemnation hearings, over the violent protest of State Senator Alfred Potter, who described it as 'an unconscionable rape of the treasury,' $50,000 was awarded to Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux for the land taken from him for the highway.

Mr. de la Chevaux was interviewed by the press and on television at the time. When asked what he planned to do with his new-found wealth, he replied that he was going to buy a new Ford car, a new net for mullet fishing, a television set, and have Sears, Roebuck come drill him a new water well. It was apparent to those watching that Mr. de la Chevaux was celebrating his good fortune already. Throughout the interview, he refreshed himself from the neck of a half-gallon bottle of Old White Stagg Blended Kentucky Bourbon, using his other hand to steady himself on the microphone stand.

His appearance on television had been a human interest filler, a last-minute laugh between the last legitimate news and the first commercial. Three weeks later, Mr. de la Chevaux was back on television, again clutching a half-gallon of Old White Stagg, but this time in the company of the governor and the president of Amalgamated World-Wide Petroleum. Sears, Roebuck's water-well drilling team had encountered not water at forty feet, but what the president of Amalgamated World-Wide Petroleum described as the 'richest field of natural gas in my thirty-year experience.'

There was now a twenty-room Gothic Revival mansion on Bayou Perdu, suspended on pilings over the brackish water

of the swamp. There was a helicopter landing pad behind the mansion for Horsey Chevaux's transportation between Bayou Perdu and New Orleans, and a new fiberglass Boston Whaler tied to one of the forty-foot classic columns at the front of the mansion. Horsey Chevaux still spent most of his time trapping muskrat and otter and poaching deer, although he no longer distilled corn whiskey. In fact, in order to assure an uninterrupted supply of Old White Stagg Blended Kentucky Bourbon, which he preferred to his own whiskey, he had bought the Old White Stagg distillery.

The Bayou Perdu Council, Knights of Columbus, to which Horsey had belonged before the gas discovery, had soon afterwards elected him Supreme Grand Knight Commander. He had reciprocated by donating to the Bayou Perdu Council what was reliably reported to be the longest solid mahogany bar in North America, acquired from a hotel being torn down in Milwaukee, plus a new building to put it in. He had then appointed himself ex-officio financial officer for the Uniforms and Social Activity Committee, the result of which was that the once shabby Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, which frankly had been something of an embarrassment on parade to more affluent councils, was now, beyond any doubt, the most splendiferous uniformed body on the Gulf Coast. Not only were their uniforms both impeccable and new, but the council traveled in two private, air-conditioned buses. Horsey had procured the buses from the company that makes them for the Greyhound people, and they were somewhat similar. The flaming yellow Bayou Perdu Council's buses had fewer seats, providing more room for the passengers; they had bars; and when the drivers touched the horn rings, eight large, chrome-plated horns on the roofs sounded off with 'Onward, Christian Soldiers!'

In some quarters of the Knights of Columbus, and in some offices of the diocesan chancellery, there was talk about this sudden, perhaps unseemly, display of wealth on the part of the Bayou Perdu Council. Monsignor John Joseph Clancy, who was both diocesan chancellor *and* spiritual adviser to

the Knights, had a word with Father Jacques dePresseps, priest of Bayou Perdu's Church of the Immaculate Conception, to which all the members of the Bayou Perdu Council K of C belonged.

Father dePresseps was an immigrant, imported from Carentan, France, to minister to the needs of a French-speaking congregation; what English he knew, he had acquired from his flock in Bayou Perdu.

In a week Father dePresseps reported back: 'Horsey say you maybe gotta point,' he said. 'Horsey say he send you a check every time he spend a little on the KC.'

'I beg your pardon?'

'Horsey say, when he drop a couple a grand, like when the KC go to see Tulane play footsball, you *comprend?* He figure what it cost him, send you a check for same thing.'

'That's very good of Mr. de la Chevaux, I'm sure,' Monsignor Clancy said. 'But what about his obligation to his own parish?'

'He already paying for that,' Father dePresseps said. 'Ever since the gas come in. I tell him what we need, he writes a check.'

'Father, this doesn't get, really, to the crux of the matter. What I'm talking about is the *propricty* of a fully uniformed council of the Knights of the Columbus, all gloriously drunk, careening down the highway to a football game in a yellow bus while the horns play "Onward Christian Soldiers." '

'With all respect, Monsignor,' Father dePresseps said. 'Horsey say, if the Bayou Perdu Council makes the Consistory embarrass, he sorry. He so sorry, he gonna quit the KC and start up the KB, so you Italians not be embarrass.'

'What in the world is the KB?' Monsignor Clancy inquired. 'And I'm not Italian. I'm Irish.'

'Knights of Bienville,' Father dePresseps said. 'Horsey say, Bienville *find* New Orleans. All Columbus do is find some island by mistake and think it's India.'

'You can't be serious!'

'Horsey say, if he starts up KB, *he* can design uniforms. He says KC uniforms look like Polish Navy.'

The Knights of Bienville never came into being, of course. It was decided at the highest echelons of the Knights of Columbus that perhaps the Bayou Perdu Council could be reformed by the example of the solemn decorum of other councils within the Consistory. And the diocese learned to expect certified checks whenever the Bayou Perdu Council had an outing. The sums were listed in the diocesan books as 'other income,' Monsignor Clancy not being able in good conscience to list them under 'Charitable Gifts' and there being no category called 'Drunk and Disorderly Conduct, Permits For.'

The Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, had gathered before at the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, their arrival heralded by a duet air-horn rendition of 'Onward, Christian Soldiers,' and F. Traywicke Conyers knew what to expect. There would be a long list of guest complaints and a longer list of damaged and purloined property. But finally there would be a five- or six-page statement of charges, promptly followed by a check in the mail to cover everything, and that, in the final analysis, was what the hotel business was all about.

F. Traywicke Conyers walked across the lobby of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, smiling at his guests, and stepped inside his office. Reverend Buck Wilson was inside. He was wearing a black suit and his clerical collar, a rather unusual thing for him. He normally ministered to his flock in blue jeans, sneakers and a T-shirt emblazoned with JESUS SAVES!

'You should wear that more often, dear Buck,' F. Traywicke said. 'You look . . . positively papal.'

'I want you to introduce me to one of the hotel's guests,' Buck said. 'I felt this was appropriate.'

'You mean the archbishop? I'm sure His Eminence would be delighted.'

'No. I mean the Reverend Almsworth Cody,' Buck said. 'The Green Inferno missionary.'

'I'm sure that will be easy to arrange,' F. Traywicke Con-

yers said. 'May I ask why you're interested in the Reverend Cody?'

'From what I hear, that guy is one of the world's greatest fund raisers,' Buck replied. 'Maybe I can get some pointers.'

And so, a few minutes later, there came a knock at the door of the Reverend Almsworth Cody's suite. A look of annoyance crossed the reverend's face. While he deeply appreciated the courtesy of the ad hoc welcoming committee in meeting him and Mrs. Wachauf at the airfield, getting rid of them at the hotel had been something of a problem.

The first thing they had done when they got to his room was call up room service and order sandwiches and coffee. Then the Reverend Bosco J. Crumpett had gone after Mrs. Wachauf and dragged her back from her room to stuff sandwiches and coffee down her throat as if she were some sort of starving heathen.

Margaret had finally been able to make her excuses and leave. After she had gone, Crumpett had been willing enough to leave, but the other three seemed determined to stay forever. And when he had finally gotten rid of them, he had been hard pressed for another excuse to have Margaret come back to the suite. The ad hoc welcoming committee had stolen his idea to ask her over for a sandwich and a cup of coffee.

After casting about desperately for another excuse to get in touch with Margaret, Cody had realized with a smile that he was stricken with an upset stomach. Margaret, as a nurse, would certainly be concerned with his stomach.

'As a matter of fact,' she said when he had telephoned her room, 'my tummy is just a little bit upset, too. They have a remarkable native remedy here in New Orleans. I was just about to call the hotel pharmacy and have them send me up some. I'll have them drop some off at your suite, too.'

'Why don't you have them deliver it all here?' Almsworth Cody had helpfully suggested. 'That would save the bellboy all those extra steps.'

'Would it be proper for me to be in your suite without a chaperone?' Margaret had asked.

'Under the circumstances, you would be visiting me in a professional capacity,' he had replied. 'Wouldn't you?'

'I suppose,' she said without much enthusiasm. 'O.K., I'll be down in just a few minutes.'

Margaret's knock at the door came just after the Reverend Cody had splashed himself liberally with a gentleman's cologne he had seen advertised on television. It was called Polish Leather, which called to his mind the odors associated with a sweaty Polish peasant harnessing a large horse to a manure spreader. On the other hand, the commercial had shown a middle-aged gentleman besieged by a half-dozen young women only moments after he had applied the cologne, and Cody had decided he was probably out of touch with things.

'What's that awful smell?' Margaret asked as she came through the door. 'Have you been nauseous, Dr. Cody?'

'It must be this musty old hotel,' he said. 'Did you bring the medicine?'

'I thought I'd call for it from here,' Margaret said.

'What is it called?' he asked, anxious to talk about anything but Polish Leather.

'Sazerac,' she said. 'It's a well-known cure for dyspepsia.'

'Is that what I have?' he asked. 'You will have to excuse my ignorance. You're talking doctor talk again, and I am just a simple layman.'

'Yes, you are, aren't you?' Margaret said with feeling. 'Just trust me, Almsworth.'

She called room service, which in the Old Royal Maison New Orleans apparently included a pharmacy, and ordered a pint of something called Sazerac.

'Interesting name,' he said. 'Is it Latin?'

'French, I believe,' Margaret said. 'It contains some herbs and spices and some other ingredients.'

Whatever it contained, Almsworth Cody decided when the first pint was gone, it certainly tasted clean and wholesome and brought him a fresh surge of energy. 'Just what

the Nursey ordered,' he said, making a little joke. 'I suppose it must be taken in limited dosages.'

'Under the circumstances,' Margaret replied, 'I think perhaps another dose would be medically indicated.' She picked up the telephone and spoke with the hotel pharmacist again.

'I wouldn't dare say this at Gick-Miss-Em,' Cody said, 'for fear of being taken at my word. But *here* I can safely say that I feel hungry enough to eat a horse. Shall we call room service, and have a small intimate dinner?'

He raised his left eyebrow in what he considered to be a significant gesture.

Margaret got his meaning immediately. She blushed coyly and said, 'Put your shoes on, Reverend. We'll have dinner downstairs in the Roasted Rib Room.'

And as he was lacing his shoes, there came the knock at the door.

'If that's that fat, sweaty little man,' Margaret said, obviously referring to Reverend Bosco J. Crumpett, 'you get rid of him.' She fled into the bathroom.

Dr. Cody opened the door to find F. Traywicke Conyers and Reverend Buck Wilson.

'Doctor Cody,' Conyers said, 'I am F. Traywicke Conyers, general manager of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans.'

'How do you do?' Dr. Cody said. 'Won't you come in?'

'I came to see if there is anything, anything at all, that I might do to make your stay in the hotel more pleasant,' Conyers said, 'and to take the liberty of presenting to you my dear friend and fellow laborer in the vineyards of the Lord the Reverend Baxter Wilson, who is a long-time admirer of yours.'

'I'm very pleased to meet you both.'

'Call me Buck, Brother Cody,' the Reverend Wilson said, putting out his hand. 'The pleasure's all mine.'

'Likewise, I'm sure,' Cody said. 'Mrs. Wachauf!'

'Yes, Reverend Cody,' Margaret called back.

'Nurse Wachauf has been giving me a little something for my stomach,' Cody explained. 'Come out and meet our

visitors.' He increased the volume of his voice. 'The general manager of the hotel and his friend.'

Margaret Wachauf came out of the bathroom immediately. She extended her hand regally to F. Traywicke Conyers whose mouth fell open. Nurse Wachauf was wearing a hand-woven native dress (made for her figure, of course; while she admired native crafts, she could see no reason to go around in a shapeless bag) which accented her ample figure.

'How do you do?' Margaret said.

'Charmed, madame,' F. Traywicke Conyers said. 'May I present the Reverend Baxter Wilson?'

'Call me Buck,' the Reverend Wilson said.

'Call you what?' Margaret asked. Her eyes widened. She found herself wondering why the Lord in His wisdom never seemed to send clergymen like this one – six-foot-two, 210 pounds and with a full head of blond hair falling boyishly over his eyes – into the Green Inferno.

'Buck,' Reverend Wilson repeated.

'You may call me Margaret,' she said. 'I'm sure we're going to be friends.'

'Mr. Conyers stopped by to ask if we needed anything,' Cody said. 'I told him your medication had cured my discomfort and that we were just about to leave for a little supper.'

'Why don't you chow down with us?' the Reverend Buck Wilson asked. 'We were just about to tie on the feedbag ourselves, weren't we, Traywicke?'

'I'm sure Doctor Cody and Mrs. Wachauf have previous plans,' Conyers said.

'Not at all,' Margaret said. 'And I would feel so much more secure in having someone with us who knows all about what we're told is this very wicked city.'

'We have a little cure for insecurity in our wicked city,' Buck Wilson said. 'We call it a Sazerac.'

'Isn't that odd?' Dr. Cody said. 'Margaret just prescribed the same thing.'

'I could tell by just looking at her that our minds run in

similar paths,' Buck Wilson said. F. Traywicke Conyers looked at him in shock. 'Why don't we stop off at the lobby lounge and have a little Sazerac? We must remember the words of Saint Timothy, who said "take a little Sazerac for thy stomach's sake and thine other infirmities." Isn't that so, Brother Cody?'

'Is there wine in Sazerac?' Brother Cody asked. 'Margaret led me to believe it was a native remedy, so to speak.'

'That's exactly what it is,' Buck Wilson said. 'And there is no more alcohol in it, I would say, than in, for example, cough syrup.'

'Yes, of course,' Brother Cody replied. 'To provide a base for the other ingredients.'

'Quite,' Buck Wilson said.

'Reverend Wilson and I will go down now and find a table,' said Conyers. 'We'll see you in the lobby.' He propelled the Reverend Wilson out of the suite and down the corridor and into an elevator.

When the door whooshed shut and they were alone, he said, 'Well, you certainly seemed taken by that woman!'

'Love in *all* forms, Traywicke,' the Reverend Wilson said solemnly. 'Don't be a reverse snob. Pride goeth before a fall, you know.'

'I had never thought of it quite that way,' F. Traywicke Conyers said soberly.

'She reminds me,' the Reverend Wilson began, 'of the second-floor matron in the orphanage. Oh, what sinful thoughts I had, as a tender youth about her!'

F. Traywicke Conyers thought that the Reverend Wilson didn't seem to recall his sinful thoughts about the second-floor matron with much remorse. Quite the contrary: he seemed to be wallowing in them.

It took the maître d' of the lobby lounge a couple of minutes to find a table for four, even for the general manager of the hotel. F. Traywicke Conyers and the Reverend Wilson were still standing outside the velvet rope when they were joined by Nurse Wachauf and Reverend Cody.

A bellboy walked by, crying loudly: 'Hot Lips Houlihan, report to the Swamp.'

F. Traywicke Conyers winced. He didn't know what it was all about, but it wasn't in keeping with the decorum of the lobby of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans. He snapped his fingers at the bellboy, who was one of Buck Wilson's flock.

'Are *you* Hot Lips Houlihan, Mr. Conyers?' the bellboy asked, obviously delighted.

'No, I am *not* Hot Lips Houlihan,' Traywicke Conyers said.

'Neither am I,' Nurse Wachauf said with visible determination.

'I was afraid *you* might be,' the bellboy said.

'Where did that call come from?' Conyers asked.

'There's two weirdos in 517,' the bellboy replied. 'One of them gave me twenty bucks and told me to keep paging until it was all gone.'

'It is all gone *now*,' Traywicke Conyers said. 'Do you understand me?'

'Yes, Mr. Conyers,' the bellboy said.

'The very idea!' Traywicke said. 'In the lobby of *my* hotel. Hot Lips Houlihan, indeed. I'd hate to tell you what she sounds like.'

An elevator door slid open, and the archbishop of Swengchan and the New Orleans diocesan chancellor, in full dress, swept into the lobby.

'What if the archbishop had heard that call?' Traywicke Conyers asked rhetorically. 'What would he have thought?'

At the sound of his title, the archbishop looked in the direction of the little group outside the velvet rope. He flashed an automatic smile at the sign of the two clerical collars and nodded politely. Then he stopped suddenly in his tracks. Monsignor John Joseph Clancy, not expecting the sudden halt, walked right into him.

'I beg your pardon, Your Eminence,' he said.

'Watch it, Jack!' the archbishop said, and then he headed

right for the group outside the velvet rope. He spread his arms as he approached. 'It is you!' he said. 'Margaret, my dear, how good to see you!'

Margaret Houlihan Wachauf's eyes widened and her mouth dropped open. And then she recognized the man in the archbishop's costume. 'Father Mulcahy!' she said.

'Oh, what a pleasant surprise!' the archbishop said. 'This must be my day for meeting old friends. You wouldn't believe who I just left!'

'I'm afraid to ask,' Margaret said.

'Margaret, I don't believe I've had the honor of meeting His Eminence,' the Reverend Dr. Almsworth Cody said.

'Oh, excuse me,' Margaret said. 'May I present the Reverend Almsworth Cody? Dr. Cody, this is . . . but you're not *Father* Mulcahy anymore, are you?'

' "Father" is just fine.' the archbishop said. 'How do you do, Reverend Cody? Margaret and I are old army buddies.'

'Your Eminence,' F. Traywicke Conyers said. 'The Old Royal Maison New Orleans is honored to have you as its guest. I am F. Traywicke Conyers, the general manager. And may I present the Reverend Baxter Wilson?'

'Call me Buck, Your Archbishopship,' Reverend Wilson said, extending his hand. Then he beamed toward Monsignor Clancy. 'Pleased to make your acquaintance, Brother.'

'How do you do?' Monsignor Clancy said with a pained smile.

The maître d' appeared. 'We have your table, Mr. Conyers.'

'Your Eminence,' F. Traywicke Conyers began, 'we are about to have a small libation. We would be honored if you would join us.'

'Nurse Wachauf, Your Eminence,' the Reverend Dr. Cody said, 'has prescribed a local tonic for fatigue. An old French remedy called Sazerac.'

'My appreciation for Margaret's medical judgement, Reverend Cody, knows no bounds,' the archbishop said with a smile. Then he turned to Monsignor Clancy. 'Would you

please offer my apologies to His Eminence and tell him that I have met another old and dear friend, and that I will be along in just a minute or two?'

'Very well, Your Eminence,' Monsignor Clancy said. He made a little bow and started out for the Jean Lafitte Pirate's Cove Room, desperately trying to find words to tell his archbishop that the other archbishop, in full dress, was now sitting in the lobby lounge of the hotel about to drink Sazerac cocktails with the proprietor of the God Is Love in All Forms Christian Church, Inc., some other Protestant clergyman of undetermined persuasion and His Eminence's old army buddy, who looked like Sadie Thompson, reincarnate.

The maître d' and two waiters saw to seating the party.

'Now, what may we bring you?' he asked.

'Would you please have the pharmacy make up some Sazerac?' the Reverend Dr. Cody answered his question. 'I think about a quart will do.'

'The pharmacy?'

'You heard what he said,' F. Traywicke Conyers said. 'Have the pharmacist make up a quart of Sazerac.'

CHAPTER SIX

When the door to suite 517 closed behind the archbishop of Swengchan and Monsignor Clancy, Hawkeye Pierce and Trapper John McIntyre struggled from their knees to their feet.

'I'm getting a little old for that,' Hawkeye said.

'Perhaps you're just out of practice,' Monsignor Pancho de Malaga y de Villa said. 'Maybe you should do it more often.'

'Judge not, lest ye be judged, Monsignor,' Hawkeye said. 'Would you like a little snort?'

'His Eminence expects us downstairs,' the monsignor said.

Hawkeye waved a Martini glass under the Monsignor's nose. 'Finest kind,' he said. 'Made with real gin and very little vermouth.'

'Well, perhaps under the circumstances,' the monsignor said. He took the extended glass.

'What, precisely, are the circumstances?' Trapper John asked. 'What's Mulcahy doing in New Orleans?'

'We just came from Rome,' the monsignor said, 'for personal reasons and on church business. I'm not allowed of course, to discuss either.'

'How long have you been working for Mulcahy?' Hawkeye asked.

'Long enough for him to have told me enough about you two,' the monsignor said. 'I'll tell you right now that this is my first and last Martini.'

'What's this wingding downstairs?'

'The New Orleans Consistory, Knights of Columbus, is holding a reception to honor the archbishop,' the monsignor said. 'And may I turn the tables on you?'

'What exactly did you have in mind?' Trapper asked.

'What brings you two to New Orleans?'

'Would you believe that I was drugged by my wife and loaded aboard an airplane in a straitjacket?' Hawkeye replied.

'Yes, I would,' the monsignor said.

'I think I like him,' Hawkeye said. 'He has a sense of humor.'

'But that doesn't answer my question,' the monsignor said. 'What are you doing in New Orleans?'

'We're here to attend the national convention of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society,' Hawkeye said.

'That, I don't believe,' the monsignor said.

'Come to think of it,' Hawkeye said, 'neither do I. Trapper, what are we doing at a gathering of tube snippers? I don't

know about you, of course, and with your professional standards anything is possible, but I'm positive I don't belong to the tube-snippers club.'

'Yes, you do,' Trapper John said. 'We both do. As a matter of fact, you're northeastern regional superintendent of the TA & VD Society.'

'I don't believe that,' Monsignor de Malaga y de Villa and Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., F.A.C.S., said in unison.

'If you think hard, Hawkeye,' Trapper John said, 'you will recall that we went to Europe last year.'

'Sure. On some kind of deal. It was cheaper to go to Europe for two weeks than it was to stay home and go clamming.'

'Right,' Trapper said. 'Wrong Way Napolitano set it up.'

'So?'

'It was what they call an "affinity group," ' Trapper John explained. 'Do you remember the way Curly Bill, the barber, got to take his wife to Tahiti with the New England Association of Funeral Home Beauticians and Cosmetologists?'

'Sure. He brought home a grass skirt for his wooden Indian.'

'By stretching a point, Curly Bill, a people barber, got himself included in the stiff prettifiers' affinity group and qualified for the cheap trip. Wrong Way did the same thing for us.'

'You mean they just let us in the TA & VD Society? There was no board examination or anything?'

'Sure there was. They gave you an examination at the airport. Don't you remember the guy with a scalpel in one hand and forceps in the other?'

'Vaguely,' Hawkeye said.

'You successfully identified both as surgical instruments. On the first try,' Trapper John said. 'That was good enough for the examining board.'

'How did you get in?'

'As a tribute to my professional standing, the examination was waived for me.'

'By whom.'

'By the northeastern regional superintendent,' Trapper John replied. 'I was touched by your faith in me.'

'But what are you going to do *here*?' Monsignor de Malaga y de Villa asked.

'The truth of the matter, Monsignor,' Trapper John said, 'is that his wife did drug him and wrap him into a straitjacket.'

'I never doubted it for a minute,' the monsignor said.

'Because she didn't want him around the Spruce Harbor Medical Center maternity ward under the circumstances.'

'What circumstances?'

'She is approximately nine months pregnant.'

'I understand completely,' the monsignor said.

'I sometimes feel the whole world is against me,' Hawkeye said.

'It is,' Trapper John said.

'At least you'll have some time to spend with His Eminence,' the monsignor said. 'How long are you going to be here?'

'Not ten seconds longer than I have to be,' Hawkeye said. 'My patients need me.'

'Hawkeye has a touching relationship with his patients, Monsignor,' Trapper John said. 'We had to hold a lottery to pick the lucky six who got to carry him on the plane.'

'Would you possibly be here four, five days?' the monsignor asked.

'You sound like you have a reason for asking,' Hawkeye said.

'I just thought it would be nice if you had a couple of days to spend with His Eminence,' the monsignor said.

Hawkeye and Trapper John had been dressing as they talked. When they finished, they looked – as Archbishop Mulcahy hoped they would – like respectable members of the medical profession. This was by design, but not by *their* design. The reason they were now wearing dark suits, white shirts, somberly striped neckties and black wing-tip shoes rather than, for example, purple sports coats, yellow turtle-

neck sweaters, red plaid trousers and basketball shoes, was because Mesdames Pierce and McIntyre had very carefully unpacked all the livid-color turtleneck sweaters and multi-hued sports coats and horse-blanket plaid trousers and put the more dignified clothing in its place.

Hawkeye turned from examining himself in the mirror. 'That's what a doctor's wife will do for you,' he said. 'You spend most of your life struggling. First to get into medical school, then to get through medical school. Then you slave and sweat through an internship and a residency. The day comes when you can call yourself a surgeon with a perfectly straight face. And then you look in the mirror, and what do you see? A friendly Buick salesman, that's what you see!'

'The archbishop asked me to make sure that you look like respectable members of the medical profession. I think His Eminence will be pleased,' Monsignor de Malaga y de Villa said.

'Aw, what does *he* know?' Trapper John said, sticking out his tongue at his reflection in the mirror.

'Stick out your tongue and say "aaah,"' Hawkeye said. The monsignor grabbed a surgeon in each hand and marched them out of suite 517, down the corridor and into the elevator.

The elevator, when they stepped into it, was already occupied by a short, plump, middle-aged gentleman and a tall, hawk-faced, gray-haired woman, rather obviously his wife. The short, plump, middle-aged gentleman was, just as obviously, a member of the medical profession. Not only was his Countess Mara necktie embellished with an army of embroidered caducei, but both he and his wife wore adhesive-backed name tags identifying him as a member of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society and her as a member of the ladies' auxiliary of that organization.

'Why, Doctor!' Trapper John said. 'How good to see you again!'

'Why, hello, there,' the doctor said in some confusion.

'You remember Dr. Pierce, of course, Doctor? And this is Monsignor de Malaga y de Villa.'

'Why, yes, of course,' the doctor said. 'How have you been, Pierce?'

'Just fine, old buddy,' Hawkeye said, warmly shaking his hand. 'We really had a ball the last time, didn't we?'

'We certainly did,' the doctor said.

'If I live to be a hundred,' Trapper John said, 'I will never forget you and the wife. You two were really the life of the party.'

'I beg pardon?'

'When she started taking off her clothes to do the belly dance on the bar, I thought I'd die laughing,' Trapper John said. 'And *you*! With your shirt off and "Make Love, Not War" printed on your chest in lipstick! That really gave the gang a laugh.'

'There must be some mistake,' the doctor said icily. 'This lady is my wife.'

'*This* is your wife?' Trapper John replied, surprise, even shock, written all over his face. Then he seemed to regain control of the situation. 'Yes, of course. My mistake, of course.'

'I thought the . . . amply endowed . . . blonde was his . . .' Hawkeye said.

'Shut up, for God's sake!' Trapper said.

'Ooops!' Hawkeye said as the elevator door opened on the lobby.

They walked quickly out of the elevator with the monsignor on their tail. They had covered perhaps twenty yards when they, and everybody else in the lobby, heard the doctor's wife speak: 'Don't you tell me you never saw those two before in your life! You greeted them like long-lost brothers!'

As the monsignor caught up with them, he heard Trapper John tell Hawkeye with great satisfaction: 'If there's one thing I can't stand, it's a tube clipper making believe he's a real doctor.'

'There ought to be a law,' Hawkeye agreed. Then he spotted Archbishop Mulcahy, the Reverend Buck Wilson, the Reverend Dr. Cody, F. Traywicke Conyers and a woman, whose back was to them, sitting in the lobby lounge. The archbishop, when he saw them, raised his hand in greeting. When he did so, the woman turned to see at whom His Eminence was waving. The color left her face.

'I told you I saw Hot Lips!' Hawkeye cried triumphantly.

'You also promised Dago Red you'd behave,' Trapper John said.

'Damn!' Hawkeye said.

'Anyway, maybe she's reformed,' Trapper John said. 'She's surrounded by the clergy.'

Hawkeye Pierce, if nothing else, was a man of his word. He had given Archbishop Mulcahy his word that he would behave. And he behaved. If his wife had seen his behaviour, he would have been flat on his back in three seconds with a thermometer in his mouth, a bear-fat poultice on his chest and his feet hanging over the side of the bed, immersed in hot Epsom salts. These were Mary Pierce's standard therapeutic measures for a sick husband, her diagnosis that he was ill based on twenty-odd years experience that the only time Hawkeye Pierce oozed charm and goodwill was when he was feverish and about to come down with the flu.

'Well, as I live and breath,' Hawkeye said, clapping his hands gleefully together. 'Unless these old eyes deceive me, it's Margaret Houlihan, formerly major, Army Nurse Corps. It is you, isn't it, Major Houlihan?'

'Hello, Dr. Pierce,' Hot Lips said.

'Dr. McIntyre!' Hawkeye said. 'Isn't this just jolly? You remember Dr. McIntyre, don't you, Major Houlihan?'

'Hello, Dr. McIntyre,' Hot Lips said.

'Hiya, Ho ... Houlihan,' Trapper John said. 'Long time no see.'

'And who are these gentlemen, if I may ask?' Hawkeye said. 'I know His Eminence, of course, but I don't believe I've had the honor and privilege of the acquaintance ...'

'May I present the Reverend C. Almsworth Cody?' Hot Lips said.

'Reverend Cody,' Hawkeye said. 'An honor and privilege to make your acquaintance.'

'A privilege to meet you, Doctor,' Reverend Cody said.

'My name is F. Traywicke Conyers,' Conyers said. 'May I say the Old Royal Maison New Orleans is proud to have you as our guests? And may I present the Reverend Baxter Wilson?'

'Call me Buck, Doc,' the Reverend Wilson said.

'Call you Buckdoc? I thought he said Wilson?' Hawkeye said. 'But no matter, Wilson or Buckdoc, meeting you is one of the high points of my day. We have His Eminence. We have the Florence Nightingale of the 4077th MASH. We have Reverend Cody. We have the Reverend Buckdoc Wilson. We have this gentleman with the pointed shoes. All we really need now for heaven on earth, pardon me, Your Eminence, is Francis Burns, M.D. Wouldn't you say so, Trapper?'

'Watch it, Hawkeye!' the archbishop of Swengchan said in surprisingly firm tones.

'Who is Dr. Burns?' the Reverend Cody asked. 'I don't believe Margaret has ever mentioned him to me.'

'As I was just saying,' Archbishop Mulcahy said, 'we had better be getting back to the reception. Right now.'

'A splendid idea,' Margaret Houlihan Wachauf said. getting up from the table.

She swept out of the lobby lounge with Archbishop Mulcahy on her heels.

Monsignor John Joseph Clancy, who had been waiting at the door to the Jean Laffite Pirate's Cove Room. let loose an audible sigh of relief when he saw the archbishop and his party returning. The reception could now proceed, more or less according to schedule. He turned to Father Kevin Gallagher, director of Saint Genevieve's Home for Wayward Girls and Unwed Mothers.

'What we'll do, Father Gallagher,' he said, 'is give the

archbishop time to introduce his guests to His Eminence and the senior officers of the Knights. Then I will signal, and you can bring the chorus in.'

The chorus to which Monsignor Clancy referred was made up of girls from St. Genevieve's. They had been practicing 'The Rose of Tralee,' 'Mother Macree' and 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling' for three days. Washed, scrubbed and attired in black choral robes, they had been waiting in a serving pantry for their cue.

Their presence, and the impending motherhood condition of three of them, had been a source of some confusion to Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, who had to be assured by Father Jacques dePresseps that they were not, as he assumed, pregnant nuns.

Horsey Chevaux was already disturbed by the way the reception was going. At all previous social gatherings of this nature, the church hierarchy made a brief, token appearance, never lasting more than ten or fifteen minutes, and then left, which permitted the Knights to get down to the serious business of getting drunk.

Tonight, however, things were different. The archbishop and his staff, and a dozen assorted high prelates and functionaries of the diocese, had already been in the Pirate's Cove Room for almost an hour and showed no inclination at all to take their leave.

Horsey, with growing impatience, had passed the time at the punch bowl, surrounded by his fellow Knights of the Bayou Perdu Council. The addition of two half-gallons of Old White Stagg Blended Kentucky Bourbon to the punch had, it was true, made it somewhat more palatable than originally concocted, but it was not the sort of thing the Bayou Perdu Council was used to drinking for more than a couple of minutes.

There was a stir at the door, and Horsey looked to see what was happening. The archbishop, the man they had come to honor, was returning to the room.

'I'll be goddamn!' Horsey said rather loudly.

'What is it?' Father Jacques dePresseps asked, slightly alarmed.

'Mus'be this punch crap I'm drinking,' Horsey said. 'For a little bit, I think I know the archbishop.'

'I don't think that's likely, Horsey, do you?' Father dePresseps said.

'Where would Horsey Chevaux know an archbishop?' Horsey said with a splendid Gallic shrug. It was, obviously, beyond credibility.

With Monsignor Clancy in the vanguard, Archbishop Mulcahy and his party were led from the door of the Pirate's Cove Room across the parquet floor to the head table, where the archbishop of New Orleans was waiting for them with a wide, welcoming smile on his face.

Horsey stared at the procession with fascination. Curiosity finally overcame his reluctance to wear his spectacles in public, especially when uniformed. He fished them out of his pocket, placed them on his nose and slid them downward until they were in focus. In a position where they were far enough from his eyes to be in focus, they were too far down on his nose to be looked through in the normal manner; Horsey had to lean his head far backward to see. He did so.

'I be goddamn!' he repeated. 'I think I know the lady with the big knockers, too, Father, what do you think of *dat?*'

'Are you sure, Horsey?' Father dePresseps asked.

'I get more goddamn sure by duh minute, but I don't knew from where, you *comprend?*'

'Perhaps it's just that you know somebody who looks like His Eminence,' Father dePresseps said.

'Your Eminence,' said Archbishop Mulcahy, 'may I present three of my oldest friends, my comrades in the Korean War, Mrs. Margaret Houlihan Wachauf, who was an army nurse, and Doctors Pierce and McIntyre?'

'Monsignor Clancy told me,' the archbishop of New Orleans said with a smile as he put out his hand to Hot Lips, 'of the lucky coincidence of you meeting again. I'm pleased to meet you, Mrs. Wachauf, and gentlemen.'

'And this, Your Eminence,' Mulcahy went on, 'is the Reverend Dr. Cody, the Reverend Mr. Wilson and Mr. F. Traywicke Conyers.'

'Mr. Conyers, I know of course,' the archbishop said. 'And I know of Reverend Wilson by reputation. Welcome to our reception for Archbishop Mulcahy!'

'May I ask, Your Eminence,' F. Traywicke Conyers inquired, 'if everything here tonight is to your satisfaction?'

'Your staff, Mr. Conyers,' the archbishop of New Orleans said, 'has again outdone themselves. I don't think I have ever before seen an ice-sculpture crucifix.'

'That was my idea, Your Archbishop,' the Reverend Buck Wilson said with quiet pride. 'I told Traywicke that Rome was big on the cross.'

'Yes, I'm sure you did,' the archbishop said with a smile capable of freezing solid all of Hot Springs, Arkansas, in three seconds flat.

"Well,' Archbishop Mulcahy said, 'everybody seems to be having a good time!'

'Especially that guy in the Polish admiral's uniform,' Trapper John agreed, nodding his head in the general direction of the far, or leprechaun ice sculpture, side of the buffet table.

'Why is he fighting with the priest?' Hawkeye asked.

'It would appear,' Monsignor John Joseph Clancy said, 'that Father dePresseps is attempting to dissuade Mr. de la Chevaux from paying his respects to His Eminence in person.'

'It looks like he failed,' Trapper said.

With a mighty shrug, Horsey Chevaux untangled Father dePresseps' arm from around his shoulders. The priest went sailing back against the buffet table. The leprechaun ice sculpture which had already begun to melt a little in the heat of the Pirate's Cove Room, slipped off its pedestal and fell headfirst into the punch bowl, which shattered and sent a wave of punch, literally spiked with Old White Stagg Blended Kentucky Bourbon, cascading down off the table and onto the parquet dance floor.

Horsey, limping just a little, his arms spread wide, lurched across the dance floor toward the assembled dignitaries.

'Father Mulcahy!' he bellowed. 'Father Mulcahy! Goddamn, I thought I never see you again!'

'Why,' said Archbishop James Patrick Mulcahy, archbishop of Swengchan, 'it's Horsey Chevaux!' Obviously delighted, the archbishop ran out onto the dance floor to meet Horsey. They came together. Horsey picked up the archbishop and held him above his head.

'Hot damn!' Horsey bellowed. 'What the hell you think about this?'

CHAPTER SEVEN

There followed a moment or two of confusion. Henri Pierre Petitpied, who at six-feet-three and 290 pounds had been Bayou Perdu's logical choice for the K of C equivalent of sergeant at arms, and who had been feeling pretty good when he boarded the bus back at Bayou Perdu and who had been resting under the buffet table, had been awakened suddenly by a shower of punch. He emerged, somewhat annoyed, from under the table and, faced with the not unfamiliar sight of Horsey holding somebody over his head, logically concluded that the party was finally under way. He drew his ceremonial sword, and shouting 'Allons *mes enfants*! Kill the Irish bastards!' charged across the floor to assist Horsey.

Father dePresseps had by this time regained his feet. He brought Knight Commander of the Peace Petitpied to the floor with a flying tackle. Lubricated by the six gallons of punch, Father dePresseps and Knight Commander of the Peace Petitpied slid together across the floor and crashed into the wall three feet to the left of the archbishop of New Orleans, who took two steps over to them and regarded them calmly.

"Allo, Archbishop,' Knight Petitpied said cordially, explaining, 'I think you already go home.'

Emergency Plan B, based on previous gatherings of this nature, was put into action. A thin black line of clergy quickly formed and separated the Bayou Perdu Council Knights from the rest of the Consistory. Three monsignors circulated quickly through the crowd, making sure all swords were replaced in their sheaths. Monsignor John Joseph Clancy frantically signaled Father Kevin Gallagher, and the chorus of St. Genevieve's Home for Wayward Girls and Unwed Mothers made a hasty entrance from the serving pantry and began to sing 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling.'

In short order, peace of a sort was restored. Archbishop Mulcahy, looking not unlike a small boy taking a Great Dane for a walk, led Horsey Chevaux up to the group sorrounding the archbishop of New Orleans.

'Archbishop,' Horsey said, 'I get carry away. I wanna' 'pologize.'

'I'm sure there must be some sort of reason for your behavior, Mr. de la Chevaux.'

'You betcha,' Horsey said. 'And I'm gonna tell everybody 'bout it.'

'Perhaps,' the archbishop said, 'it would be best if you waited until the entertainment is concluded.'

'Sure thing,' Horsey said. 'Inna meantime, I can talk wit' my old friends.'

'If you can do so quietly, please, Mr. de la Chevaux,' the archbishop said.

'You're O.K., Archbishop,' Horsey said with feeling. He turned to Mrs. Margaret Houlihan Wachauf. 'Hiya, Hot Lips,' he said. 'Remember me?'

Hawkeye and Trapper eyed Horsey de la Chevaux with undisguised curiosity.

'I owe you two guys,' Horsey said, turning to them. 'You name it, Horsey'll buy it.'

'Thanks a lot,' Trapper said. 'But offhand I can't think of a thing—'

'You don't remember me, Doc?' Horsey said, visibly disappointed.

'Uh . . .' Trapper said uncomfortably.

Horsey extended his arms from his sides and lifted his left leg. He then jumped up and down on his right leg.

'Whatchu think 'bout dat, huh?' Horsey said, triumph in his voice.

'My God!' Hawkeye said. 'Horsey!'

'You 'member me, huh, Hawkeye?'

'You betcha,' Hawkeye said. He and Horsey embraced each other.

Trapper still looked baffled. Archbishop Mulcahy leaned over to him and whispered in his ear.

'Horsey,' Trapper John said. 'Horsey, I'm sorry. Of course, I remember you.'

'Wit' me,' Horsey said. 'You never gotta say you sorry.'

'Your Eminence,' said the archbishop of New Orleans to the archbishop of Swengchan, 'perhaps you would be good enough to explain all this to me?'

'Under the circumstances,' Archbishop Mulcahy said, 'that would seem to be a very wise thing to do indeed. But I wonder if there is someplace we might go and sit down? I seem to get tired very easily lately.'

'So I understand, your Eminence,' the archbishop said.

'How could you know about that?' Mulcahy asked, obviously surprised.

'Let's say that I heard from someone in Rome we both deeply admire,' the archbishop of New Orleans said. 'Why don't we go into the back room?'

Archbishop Mulcahy turned to his guests.

'You behave until I get back,' he said. 'And lay off the booze, all of you,' he said.

The two archbishops left the Pirate's Cove Room.

'I must say, Margaret,' the Reverend Cody said, 'that I think that remark was uncalled for.' He hiccupped. 'I have never partaken of spirits except for medical reasons.'

'I'm sure he didn't mean you, Reverend,' Margaret said. She passed him the pitcher of Sazerac which she had thought-

fully brought from the lobby lounge. 'Have some more of this. It will settle your stomach.'

'I must say, I need it,' he said. 'After this shameful demonstration.'

The room into which the archbishop of New Orleans led the archbishop of Swengchan was a small one intended for use both as a storeroom and an office for the maître d' of the Pirate's Cove Room. Its walls were lined with shelving, holding stocks of liquor, glasses, paper napkins and the like. A small desk held an adding machine and a telephone. Archbishop Mulcahy made his way to the chair at the desk and lowered himself into it. The Archbishop of New Orleans picked a bottle of brandy from the shelf.

'You want a snort?' he asked.

'Please,' Archbishop Mulcahy said, 'three fingers worth.'

The archbishop twisted the cap from the bottle with a practiced gesture, splashed a generous amount of brandy into two glasses and finally handed one to Archbishop Mulcahy.

'Mud in your eye,' he said, tossing it off neatly. He started to refill his glass.

'Here's to the K of C, God bless them,' Mulcahy said.

'You want to start at the beginning?' the archbishop of New Orleans said. 'Where in the world did you meet Horsey Chevaux?'

'I guess you know I was a chaplain,' Mulcahy said.

'I'd heard,' the archbishop said.

'I was assigned to the "Double Natural" MASH,' Mulcahy said. 'More formally known as the 4077th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital. Do you know what a MASH does?'

'I can infer what it does from the name,' the archbishop of New Orleans said.

'What it really is is a combination between a first-aid station and a large surgical hospital,' Mulcahy explained. 'When a soldier is wounded or hurt, he is first treated by the corpsmen, who are enlisted men trained to give a high-quality first aid. They live and work right with the front-line troops. Then there's what they call a battalion aid station

which has one medical doctor. He makes a quick diagnosis of the extent of the injury and the decision what to do with the wounded man. Most wounded soldiers at least pass through a MASH. Those that require immediate surgery to preserve their lives get the operation right there. Then, as soon as they have recovered enough so they can be safely moved, they're moved – the army says exacuated, which always confused me a little – to hospitals further to the rear, as far back as the United States, for either recuperation or more corrective surgery. Do you follow me?'

'I think so,' the archbishop of New Orleans said.

'The point, reduced to its essentials, I'm trying to make is that the mission of a MASH, and the responsibility of its medical staff, is to perform what surgical techniques, and only what surgical techniques, are required to keep the soldier from dying. That's what I mean by saying it's a combination of first aid station, because its job is the immediate one of keeping the wounded soldier alive, and a major hospital, because the surgery required, as an immediate measure, is often major surgery.'

'I think I understand,' the archbishop of New Orleans said.

'Which is why Horsey Chevaux, when I met him, was really in trouble,' Archbishop Mulcahy said. 'He required more than the "Double Natural" MASH was equipped to give him.'

'I'm afraid I don't understand you,' the archbishop said.

'Horsey was a squad leader, a sergeant, in the infantry,' Mulcahy said. 'He was leading his squad up a mountain the army had come to call, for good reasons Heartbreak Ridge. He was struck in the right leg by a large piece of shrapnel, probably from a mortar.'

'I'd heard he had a war wound,' the archbishop said.

'A war wound suggests, I'm afraid,' Archbishop Mulcahy said, 'one of those wounds you see in the movies. A little blood, a little bandage, and an hour later the man is back on duty. Horsey was very badly injured.'

'I didn't mean to suggest . . .' the archbishop of New Orleans said.

Archbishop Mulcahy ignored him, and went on with his story. 'What hit Horsey was apparently a large fragment – about the size of a tomato juice can lid, I suppose – of a mortar shell. A quarter-inch-thick piece of jagged steel, four inches across, flying through the air, striking his leg up near the groin. The effect was something like running a radial saw against the leg, except that a radial saw would do less damage.'

'Oh, my God!' the archbishop of New Orleans said.

'In a sense, he was lucky. If the shard – the word for a shell fragment is shard; I suppose I shall never be able to forget some of the military cant I learned – had struck him three or four inches away in another direction, it could have torn open his abdomen or removed his sexual organs. Horsey was lucky in the sense that what the shard did was open up his leg for about four inches, a wound maybe three inches deep, and then it flew off. It didn't remain in the leg, in other words.

'The force of the wound was enough to knock Horsey off his feet. He sort of crumbled backward. He was aware of pain in his leg, and, when he looked down at his middle, his groin was soaked with blood. As he watched in horror, he saw a stream of blood as thick as his thumb squirt up, subside and then squirt up again. The femoral artery had been severed. Horsey probably didn't know that it was a femoral artery, but he'd had enough training to know that he was in serious trouble.

'And so did his men. They tore open his trousers to get a better look at the wound, and then they tried to stop the bleeding with a tourniquet. But they couldn't apply enough pressure to stop the bleeding. Every time Horsey's heart beat, a jet of blood shot six inches out of him.

'It was obvious to everybody, including Horsey, that unless the bleeding could be stopped, Horsey was going to die from loss of blood, bleed to death right there on the moun-

tainside. So one of his men – and this took a certain kind of courage too – stuck his fingers in Horsey's gaping wound, found the artery and stopped the bleeding by pinching what was left of the artery with his fingers.

'Then they had the problem of getting him off the hill. 'The Hill' is what the GI's called any mountain they happened to be fighting on. It was anything but a grassy knoll. Granite and shale, steep, slippery, hard enough to maneuver over in any case, difficult to move over while carrying weapons. Just about impossible to move over while carrying a wounded man.'

'How did they manage?'

'I really don't know,' Archbishop Mulcahy said. 'They dragged and carried him somehow, with the one man still with his fingers in the wound pinching the artery as best he could. One of the patrol ran ahead of the others to get medics and a stretcher.

'Once they were on the narrow, rutted road and had the stretcher, things were a little easier, of course, but even the medics with their greater knowledge couldn't stop the bleeding. Still holding the vessel pinched shut, they carried him about half a mile to the battalion aid station.'

'What's that?' the archbishop of New Orleans asked.

'There's a doctor at the battalion aid station. What he offers is emergency treatment. It's not a hospital or anything like that. Just one more sandbagged hole in the ground, this one occupied by a doctor.

'The battalion surgeon, of course, knew immediately what had happened. He looked into the wound and saw that not only was the artery severed, but that about three inches of it was gone, just torn out by the mortar shard.

'He put an arterial clamp, a sort of surgical pliers that locks in a closed position, on the upper part of the artery and called for a medical evacuation helicopter. He knew that if Horsey were to live, he would have to get him to surgery just as soon as possible.'

'There was nothing he could do for him there?'

'Nothing but clamp the artery.'

'So they sent Horsey to the hospital in a helicopter?'

'No. They couldn't get a helicopter. Horsey wasn't the only critically wounded soldier needing evacuation. There were only so many evacuation choppers, and he was going to have to wait his turn. When the doctor heard it would be thirty minutes before a chopper could be sent, he made another decision.

'He sent Horsey the rest of the way down the hill in a jeep with a corpsman riding along for moral support. He was also to guard the clamp on the artery.'

'But was he able to give him something for his pain?'

'The doctor gave him fifty milligrams of Demerol, not really enough, but he didn't want to snow him under either. Horsey was hurting bad, even with the Demerol.'

'Wouldn't it have been better to wait until a helicopter could be sent?'

'Probably. If the helicopter had shown up when it was promised, in half an hour, it would have been a ten- to fifteen-minute flight to the MASH. That's forty-five minutes. It took just about that long by land. And if he went by jeep, the corpsman would be right there, guarding that clamp. The wounded were carried in little baskets right next to the landing skids. Horsey could have bled to death, if, unattended and delirious, he did something to dislodge the clamp on the femoral artery. The battalion surgeon probably made the right decision.

'He did what he could to keep Horsey alive for the moment, and he pinned the red tag – "critically injured, immediate attention required" – on him, wrote on it that he had given him fifty milligrams of Demerol and sent him down the hill.

'I first saw Horsey when the jeep roared into the MASH. When there were a lot of casualties and they didn't need me in the surgical tent, I tried to be around the receiving ward which was another tent. Sometimes, I think, it helped some of the boys to have a chaplain talk to them a little.

Sometimes, we even prayed together. Hawkeye told me that a patient's mental condition when he entered surgery was often very important.'

'Hawkeye?'

'Doctor Benjamin Franklin Pierce,' Mulcahy said. 'The taller of the two you just met.'

The archbishop nodded.

'He wasn't much more than a boy when I first met him, just out of his surgical residency. But he was a fine surgeon even then. And a very wise man, in his way.'

'You seem very impressed with him.'

'With both of them,' Mulcahy said. 'Benjamin Franklin Pierce and John Francis Xavier McIntyre. And not just because they could write M.D. after their last names. Anyway, my job, as I saw it, was to try to make things a little easier for the boys before they went to surgery. I helped the corpsman carry Horsey from the jeep into the receiving ward, and, when I saw the red tag, I went into the surgical suite and told Hawkeye.

'He was able to come right away, leaving somebody else to close up the boy he had on the table. I don't know what kind of a bedside manner he has with his patients now, but he had a fine one in Korea. He walked up to Horsey's bed, read the tag and smiled at him.

' "What's your name, friend?" Hawkeye asked.

' "Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux," Horsey replied.

' "That's a good German name," Hawkeye said.

' "How's it look, Doc?" Horsey asked.

' "Don't start making Dago Red here any promises you don't have to," Hawkeye said. "I think we can keep you alive." '

'Dago Red?' the archbishop asked.

'Oddly enough, it was a term of endearment,' Mulcahy said. 'I didn't mind at all. Anyway, Hawkeye ordered some whole blood for Horsey and told him that as soon as he had a couple of pints, they'd see about his leg.

' "It hurts," Horsey said. "Can I have something to stop the pain?"

' "Yes. We'll give you something very soon to prepare you for surgery. Can you stand it a little longer?"

' "Yeah, I can stand it," Horsey said. "What I couldn't stand is losing the leg."

' "We'll do our best," Hawkeye said, and then, when he had his face turned so Horsey couldn't see it, he looked at me and told me with his eyes that the leg would have to be amputated. Hawkeye could always say a lot with just his eyes. I knew what he wanted me to do. He wanted me to decide whether it would be better to tell Horsey beforehand that he was lucky to be alive, that a leg wasn't all that important, or whether it would be better not to tell him. My job was to calm him down before surgery. How I did that, I'd have to figure out for myself.'

Archbishop John Patrick Mulcahy stopped talking. Obviously lost in his thoughts, he stared at the empty glass in his hand. He closed his eyes, and a look of pain crossed his face. He shook his head.

CHAPTER EIGHT

'You thought,' the archbishop of New Orleans said gently, 'or the doctor thought, that the leg would have to be amputated?'

Mulcahy opened his eyes and extended his empty glass. The archbishop of New Orleans splashed brandy into it. Mulcahy took a deep swallow and then went on with his story:

'It looked that way,' he said, 'even from what I could see of it. The femoral artery had been severed for about an hour then, maybe an hour and a half. Very little blood at all had been fed to the leg. The lower leg was cold and clammy and

blue, almost black. And there was, of course, the damage to the muscle and tissue as well.

'Hawkeye didn't fool Horsey. He watched Hawkeye go back into the surgical suite, and then he turned to me.

' "Is that doctor a friend of yours, Father?"

' "Yes, he is," I told him. "And he's a very fine surgeon. You'll be in very good hands, Jean-Pierre."

' "You call me Horsey," he said. "And you do me a favor, Father?"

' "Anything I can, Horsey," I said.

' "You tell your friend the doctor that if he cuts off my leg, I don't want to wake up. You *comprend*?"

' "You're lucky to be alive, Horsey," I said. "Isn't it better to be alive with one leg than dead with two?"

' "Not for Horsey Chevaux, it ain't," Horsey said. "I'm Cajun, Father. I live in bayou country, what some people call a swamp. You don't get around the swamp on one leg and a crutch. Horsey Chevaux don't want to spend the rest of his life with people carrying him around."

' "Isn't that really God's decision to make?" I asked.

' "Then maybe if God is good, like I believe all these years, he let me die in there. He is gonna take off the leg, the doctor, ain't he?"

' "Your leg is very badly hurt, Horsey," I said.

' "Then I ask God to let me die," Horsey said.'

'The poor man!' the archbishop of New Orleans said.

'He wasn't the first boy I'd met in the "Double Natural" MASH who wanted to die,' Mulcahy said. 'Far too many torn-up youngsters came in there in so much pain and so badly torn up that they wanted to die. But you can never grow used to that. What bothered me about Horsey was that I knew Hawkeye could keep him alive, *if* Horsey had the will to live. But without that will to live, with the exact reverse, with Horsey wanting to die rather than spend the rest of his life with only one leg, I wasn't so sure.

'I stayed with him while he received two pints of whole blood. And then Hawkeye came back.

' "How do you feel, Dutch?" he asked.

' "Doc, you gonna try to save my leg?" Horsey asked.

' "I'll do my best."

' "If your best ain't good enough, just pull the plug, will you?" Horsey said. "I beg you, Doc! I never beg no man for nothing before."

' "No, I don't suppose you have," Hawkeye said. "Tell you what, Dutch, you get Dago Red to put in a good word for you with his boss, and we'll shoot for a miracle."

'Horsey looked up at me, and said, "Pray for me, Father." And I tell you, I don't think I ever prayed harder in all my life, starting right then.'

'Well, your prayers were apparently answered,' the archbishop said.

'Hot Lips – Major Houlihan – who was the senior surgical nurse,' Mulcahy went on as if he hadn't heard the archbishop's reply, 'came then.'

' "You gonna put me out now, lady?' Horsey asked.

' "No," Hot Lips said. "We're going to take a little blood to see what your blood count is."

' "You put blood in one place and take it out some other place," Horsey said, joking even under those circumstances.

' "Then we'll take you into the other room," Hot Lips said, "and fix you up."

' "Lady," Horsey said, "if I wake up without a leg, I don't want to wake up here. You understand me? I ask, I beg, the doctor to pull the plug."

' "Doctor Pierce is a fine surgeon," Hot Lips said. "Probably the best in Korea.'

' "Write that down quick, Dago Red," Hawkeye said. "And get her to sign it."

' "If you acted more like the surgeon you are than a drunken college boy, your patients might have more faith in you," Hot Lips snapped at him.

' "You a drinking man, Doc?" Horsey asked.

' "I have been known to take a drop or two on occasion," Hawkeye said.

' "If you gotta pull the plug on me," Horsey said, "there's fifty or sixty bucks in my wallet. You take it and have a drink on Horsey."

' "Get him into the operating room," Hawkeye snapped. "What's everybody waiting for? There are no miracles around here."

'Horsey shut up then,' Mulcahy said. 'He knew he'd made his point, that he'd gotten through to the doctor who was going to operate on him. There was really nothing else he could say.

'They rolled him into the operating suite and put him on the table. Just as soon as Ugly John the Gas Man —'

'I beg pardon?'

'Doctor Black, John Black, the anaesthesiologist,' Mulcahy explained. 'Just as soon as Ugly John checked to make sure that Horsey's blood pressure was over a hundred, he put him under. Hot Lips – Nurse Houlihan – cut away Horsey's trousers around the wound, and Hawkeye got his first good look at the problem.

' "Put the prayer machine in low gear for a long, hard pull, Dago Red," he said to me. "This boy's in bad shape. We gotta get a couple of low titre O and bail them into him before we start.'

'Dago Red?' the archbishop of New Orleans asked.

'When I first met Doctor Pierce, we drank a little red wine. It was a nickname, a term of endearment even,' Mulcahy explained.

'It seems a bit . . . irreverent,' the archbishop of New Orleans said.

'I didn't consider it to be,' Mulcahy said, and there was a touch of coldness in his voice. He went on, 'And I suppose the remark was intended as much for the others at the table as it was for me, to let them know how serious the situation was.

' "Can you save the leg, Doctor?" Hot Lips asked.

' "Shame on you, Hot Lips," Trapper said. "That would be going against regulations. When that much artery is gone,

when the blood supply has been cut off this long, the official policy is to chop."

' "Let's see if we can get some of the lower femoral artery free," Hawkeye said. "I'm going to open him up vertically. Scalpel." '

'Hot Lips slapped a scalpel into his hand. Hawkeye made a vertical incision in Horsey's leg from just below where the leg creases downward to the upper end of Horsey's wound.

' "Hot Lips, give us a couple of those appropriately named army-navy retractors," Hawkeye said, "and hang on tight when I turn them over to you." '

'You'll have to excuse me,' the archbishop of New Orleans said. 'I don't know what you're talking about.'

'What Hawkeye was trying to do was work his way through the layers of muscle and tissue in Horsey's leg to find the lower portion of the artery. He tried to work it loose and stretch it, so he could reconnect it.'

'Is that possible?'

'Sometimes,' Mulcahy said. 'In this case, it wasn't. They tried, but it was soon apparent that so much of the femoral artery had been carried away that what was left simply could not be stretched enough.

' "I suppose that does it," Ugly John Black said with regret. in his voice.

' "No cracks from the cheap seats, please," Hawkeye said. "Just pass your gas as discreetly as possible."

' "Well, what the hell can you do?" Ugly John asked. "I want to bring him back just as soon as I can, Hawkeye. Chop it and get it over with."

' "Trapper," Hawkeye said, "do you remember enough of first-year anatomy to recognize the saphenous vein if you should find it in there?"

' "I seem to recall that it was located somewhere between the knee and the scrotum," Trapper said. "Rake retractor, Hot Lips."

' "Damn, Hawkeye, you're going to try a saphenous vein graft?" Ugly John asked.

' "If you keep talking ugly, Dirty John, Dago Red will put a whammy on you," Hawkeye said.'

'I'm afraid you've lost me again,' the archbishop of New Orleans said.

'There's a vein called the saphena which goes from the groin all the way to the ankle. It has no necessary function, and doctors frequently remove it in treating varicosities. What Hawkeye was going to do was to take a segment of saphenous vein from the opposite, uninjured thigh to bridge the gap in the injured artery.'

' "May I say something, Doctor?" Hot Lips asked.

' "Your sordid confessions will have to wait until Dago Red and I are not quite so busy."

' "When they get him to a general hospital," Hot Lips said, "they're going to know what you've done."

' "So they write me a nasty letter," Hawkeye said. "So what?"

' "They're liable to amputate anyway," Hot Lips said.

' "As grossly infatuated with regulations as some of those idiots are," Hawkeye said, "I doubt very much that they would actually saw somebody's leg off just to follow regulations."

' "But you won't be able to tell if the procedure has been successful," Hot Lips said, "for a week to ten days. And you can't keep him here that long."

' "I guess I get another one of those nasty letters telling me I've broken the regulation that says I can't keep a patient for a week to ten days."

'Well, to make a long story short, Trapper dissected out four or five inches of saphenous vein. Meanwhile, Hawkeye was cleaning up the wound and identifying the ends of the artery, above and below. There was back-bleeding from the lower end, indicating that some blood was getting down there by collateral circulation. Neither of them, then, was very familiar with vascular surgery, and there was some need for haste. Still, as Hawkeye pointed out, "If we hurry too much, we'll screw it up." Carefully, painstakingly, they sewed the

vein graft in place, after reversing it so that the valves which Our Father places in the saphenous vein would not impede the flow of arterial blood. When they were done they released, first, the clamp on the lower end of the artery. Blood flowed into the graft. Then, holding their breath, they released the upper clamp. There were a few areas that spurted, but they were closed with silk sutures. Ugly John left his machinery long enough to go to the foot of the table and feel under the drapes.

' "Beautiful. He has a pulse in his foot. The color's coming back, too," he announced, raising the drapes for a quick peek.'

'And that's all there was to it?' the archbishop of New Orleans asked.

'Well, there were other problems,' Mulcahy said. 'Like keeping Horsey around until it was evident that his leg was safe, but that's almost another story.'

CHAPTER NINE

The publisher of the New Orleans *Picaroon-Statesman*, Colonel (Louisiana State Guard, retired) Beauregard Beaucoupmots prided himself, as he frequently told anyone he could get to listen, on letting "the boys in the city room run the paper. I only step in when they're obviously about to run off the track or when I come across something I think they're liable to miss.'

Like most newspaper stories, there was a germ of truth buried somewhere in the verbiage. He did, indeed, let the boys in the city room run the paper, but this was less enlightened management than enlightened self-interest.

Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots had acceded to the publisher's chair of the *Picaroon-Statesman* by right of inheritance nearly thirty years before. He had just then returned from military service in World War Two, to which he would frequently refer over the years without mentioning that his service had been a second lieutenant at the quartermaster

center, Camp Lee, Virginia, where, for six months, he had been officer-in-charge of Post Movie Theater Number Two.

Controlling interest in the *Picaroon-Statesman* had been left, in the last will and testament of Beauregard Beaucoupmots, Beauregard's grandfather and founder of the publishing enterprise, to Beauregard Beaucoupmots, Jr., widely known as 'Little Beaucoups,' Beauregard's father.

When Beauregard Beaucoupmots, Sr., passed on, just when Beauregard came home from Camp Lee, Little Beaucoups was a resident of the Greater Gulf Coast Health Farm and Alcoholic Treatment Center, and control of the paper passed, by decree of the Probate Court, to Beauregard, his only son, who was named his guardian.

This event was described in the *Picaroon-Statesman* under a headline reading: WAR VETERAN BECOMES PUBLISHER. Shortly afterward, Beauregard Beaucoupmots, second lieutenant, quartermaster corps reserve, was appointed to the military staff of His Excellency, the governor of Louisiana, in the grade of major, Louisiana State Guard, thus continuing a military career which now spanned three decades.

An accommodation had been reached between the governor (and subsequent governors) and Manfried C. Crumschnagle ('Manny the Crum'), editor of the *Picaroon-Statesman*. If the governor could keep Buckminister Beaucoupmots off the back of Manny the Crum, Manny the Crum would keep the *Picaroon-Statesman* off the back of the administration. Editor Crumschnagle was giving away less than it first appears: he had long before learned that the people of Louisiana, having been informed weekly for two and a half centuries of gross corruption in the State administration, had grown a little bored with it. As a practical matter, stories about corruption in the state administration, had grown a little out of proportion for the space available in the *Picaroon-Statesman* which could more profitably be used for advertising.

This is not to suggest that Major (later, Colonel) Beacoupmots was not of legitimate value to the governor's office.

He cut quite an imposing figure in his uniform, and it was handy to have someone around who could call the State Troopers to attention in a military manner as the governor emerged from his official limousine or his official airplane.

He was even respected within the ranks of the State Guard. There was no one else around able to call upon the Congress for State Guard appropriations with more clout than the publisher of the *Picaroon-Statesman*. It was generally acknowledged, too, that the *Picaroon-Statesman*'s impassioned editorial demands that the State Guard protect the mouth of the Mississippi from North Korean and North Vietnamese amphibious landings had kept the Guard home where it belonged during the Korean and Vietnamese wars. .

Buckminister Beaucoupmot's talents had not gone unappreciated by other state organizations either. He had for years been publicity chairman of the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce; public relations adviser to the Louisiana Tourist Commission; and for ten years, ever since its founding, publicity chairman of the Louisiana Council of Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Zen Buddhists.

Over the years, his relationship with Manny the Crum had evolved into a wordless gentleman's agreement. Manny the Crum had a free hand to run the paper (and with the exception of a certain disinterest in the antics of the local politicos, Manny the Crum did a very creditable job), and Buckminister Beaucoupmots limited himself to making a few suggestions now and again.

Colonel Beaucoupmots had read the life of William Randolph Hearst and drawn the obvious parallel between the two of them, as publishing tycoons, to the point where his suggestions came to Manny the Crum attached to little pieces of paper, imprinted at the top in flaming red letters, MUST RUN ! and bearing Colonel Beaucoupmots' initials.

Three such MUST RUN !'s had come to Manny the Crum's desk that day. The first, obviously originated by the deputy public relations adviser of the Louisiana Tourist Commision, called Manny's attention to a distinguished gathering of

healers, the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society, at the Old Royal Maison New Orleans. This was a fairly standard MUST RUN! Whenever a convention numbered more than six souls, it had its story told in the pages of the *Picaroon-Statesman*. If there were twelve or more conventioneers, there was a picture *and* a story. It made the conventioneers feel good, and it provided the Tourist Commission with a file of press clippings so they could impress potential conventioneers.

These were tastefully mingled with clear photos and vague prose describing the artistes of Bourbon Street (in particular Miss Bonnie Blue Flagg and her 'Dance of the Rebellion,' with Miss Flagg photographed at the conclusion of her performance when she was wearing nothing at all, one-third of her modesty protected by a three-by-five-inch Confederate flag on a staff held over the junction of her legs, upside down, signifying surrender at Appomattox Court House). It was a proven, sure-fire technique.

Normally, a MUST RUN! involving a bunch of touring doctors would have been assigned to one of the junior reporters, releasing him or her from the task of going over last years obituaries prior to telephoning the family of the deceased to inquire if they would be interested in running a short 'In Loving Memory' advertisement on the anniversary of the deceased's passing.

The second MUST RUN! appeared, to Manny the Crum's astonished eyes, to be almost legitimate. The Knights of Columbus, the whole Consistory, were having a reception at the Old Royal Maison New Orleans. Since it was the whole Consistory, that meant that Manny the Crum's favorite fraternal organization, the Bayou Perdu Council, would be on hand. Their presence at any gathering was almost always newsworthy. The *Picaroon-Statesman*, only two months before, had won a News-Picture-of-the-Month award from the AP for a photograph of Knight Horsey de la Chevaux in full uniform formally surrendering his ceremonial sword to Captain Grogarty of the riot squad following a misunder-

standing at the Ooo La-La Show Bar. The Bayou Perdu Coun cil had not understood, until after they had paid the $5.50 entrance fee, that the strip-teasers of the Ooo-La-La were boys. There had followed what Captain Grogarty had called 'The worst Donnybrook in ten years.'

Manny the Crum prided himself on his nose for news. If there was to be no story in a meeting between the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, and a Chinaman, the archbishop of Swengchan, there would be no story in the Second Coming.

The third MUST RUN!, like the second, had obviously originated in the offices of the assistant publicity chairman of the Louisiana Council of Catholics, Protestant, Jews and Zen Buddhists, for it, too, dealt with a clergyman. The Reverend Dr. Almsworth Cody and Mrs. Margaret H. Wachauf, R.N., were at the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, fresh from the Green Inferno Christian Medical Mission of San Marcos, Brazil.

Manny the Crum looked around the city room. Ace general assignment reporter Lemuel Travers, winner of three Best Story-of-the-Year awards and twice recommended for a Pulitzer Prize, was at his desk, his nose buried in a copy of the *Picaroon-Statesman*. This is not to say that 'Ace' was reading the paper; Ace Travers had dozed off, and his nose had come to rest in it.

'Ace!' Manny the Crum shouted in his familiar, piercing voice. 'Off your ass!'

Ace Travers, yawning widely and rubbing the sleep from his eyes, approached the desk of the city editor.

'You wanted me, Chief?' he asked.

'You need either medical attention or religion,' Manny the Crum said. 'I'm going to see that you get both.'

'Today?'

'Get over to the Old Royal Maison New Orleans,' Manny said. 'First, see some doctor named Francis Burns. If he's sober, take his picture and find out what the hell the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society is.'

'Tube snippers,' Ace replied instantly.

'Huh?'

'The male sterilization operation,' Ace said. 'Now that your lurid curiosity has been satisfied, do I have to go?'

'There's enough of them to hold a convention?' Manny asked.

'How could I possibly clean up a story like that for a family newspaper like this one?' Ace asked.

'You'll think of something,' Manny said. 'When you're finished with him, look up the Reverend Dr. Almsworth Cody and his nurse.'

'He's a tube snipper, too?'

'No. He's been in Brazil bringing Christ to the savages of the Green Inferno. I guess he's in town to raise some dough. Maybe a story would help him.'

'You're putting me on, Manny, and in my condition that's not kind.'

'See if you can get him in a Frank Buck hat – you know, a jungle suit. Maybe he brought one of the savages with him. If necessary, borrow a spear from the museum.'

'I don't think they use spears in the Green Inferno. I think blowguns are what they use.'

'So borrow a blowgun. If you can't find one, then get the savage to hold the point of the spear out of the picture,' Manny said. 'And when you're finished with that, the Knights of Columbus Consistory is having a reception—'

'Oh, Manny . . .' Ace complained.

'For a Chinaman. A genuine Chinaman archbishop.'

A flicker of interest crossed Ace's eyes. 'Indeed?'

'And it's the whole Consistory,' Manny finished. 'Which means that the Bayou Perdu Council will be there.'

'Is Horsey out of jail?' Ace asked, for the first time showing genuine interest. 'The last time I saw him, there were six cops sitting on him.'

'The governor pardoned him,' Manny the Crum said. 'Said the manner of his arrest violated the terms of the formal surrender. He even made Grogarty give him his sword back.'

'Maybe I can get a picture of the Chinaman archbishop

with the savage,' Ace mused aloud. 'With Horsey, sword drawn, and Jungle Jim in the background.'

'Pick up a photographer and move it, Ace,' Manny the Crum said.

The assignment did not begin well for Ace Travers. When he stopped by the photography department of the *Picaroon-Statesman* to pick up Fisheye Fourregière, the chief photographer, not daring to look Ace in the eye, turned his head toward the back of the room and called, 'Ms. MacDonald! I have an assignment for you.'

'Fisheye!' Ace protested immediately. 'No!'

'Sorry, Ace,' Fisheye said. 'That's the way it's gotta be.'

'I'll get you for this, Fisheye,' Ace said solemnly. 'Somehow, some way, you'll pay for this!'

Ms. MacDonald, whose first name was Prudence, was twenty-four years old. Before settling on a career in what she called photojournalism, she had been a lifeguard, a karate instructor and finally a smoke jumper for the Washington State Department of Forestry. She had first come to New Orleans to attend a convention of the International Association of Women Forest Fighters, liked what she saw and stayed. She was president of the New Orleans Chapter for Female Equality in All Things.

Ace Travers had met Ms. MacDonald on her third day on the job, when she had been assigned as his photographer. Not aware of her background and seeing only an attractive young woman of twenty-four with shoulder-length, straight hair parted in the middle, sunglasses, an amply filled sweater and an entirely attractive mini-skirt, he had been drawn to her.

She had accepted his invitation to have a drink in the Fountainbleau Room of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, and had, he thought, melted nicely into his arms when they began to dance to the strains of Henri Lipshitz and his Royal New Orleanians. He had permitted his left hand to drop lower on Ms. MacDonald's back than Ms. MacDonald had apparently felt proper, for the next thing he knew he was

flying through the air. Just before he crashed into the bandstand, he heard Ms. MacDonald call, 'Keep your filthy paws to yourself, you filthy male chauvinist sexist pig!'

Ace had tried to make amends. Ms. MacDonald was gone from the Fountainbleau Room by the time he regained consciousness, but he had stopped by the hotel florist and ordered a dozen long-stemmed roses to be sent to her. She returned them to him the next morning in the city room. First, she beat him around the head with them, and then dumped them in his lap.

For some reason, Ace's peers on the city side of the *Picaroon-Statesman* had thought this was amusing, and the whole business had rather shattered Ace's carefully cultivated reputation as the Don Juan of the Fourth Estate.

Ms. MacDonald, two single-lens cameras dangling from around her neck and a large leather accessory case hanging from her left shoulder, came to the front of the photography department.

'Hello, Prudence!' Ace said. 'Nice to see you again.'

'It's Ms. MacDonald to you, pal,' Prudence said. 'Unless you really want me to work out on you.'

'Mr. Travers will explain the assignment to you,' Fisheye Fourregière said.

'As far as I'm concerned,' Prudence said, 'his only function is to write down the names of the people whose photographs I take.'

On that jovial note, they left the office and walked through the narrow streets of the French Quarter to the Old Royal Maison New Orleans. As his mother had taught him, Ace tried to walk on the left, or street, side of Ms. MacDonald. Whenever he moved to her left, however, Ms. MacDonald pushed him off the sidewalk into the gutter with a skillful swinging movement of her accessory bag.

A large sign in the lobby of the hotel directed him to the fifth-floor headquarters of the Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society. In the elevator, the first time she had spoken to him since the evening three weeks before when she had

sent him flying into the bandstand of the Fountainblcau Room, Prudence MacDonald spoke to Lemuel Travers.

'What's a vas deferens?' she asked.

Ace Travers would be grateful for the rest of his natural life that he didn't answer the question as he was tempted to answer it, which is to say, in his usual piquant, colorful, descriptive way. For the first time since he was thirteen, in fact, when he had absentmindedly wandered into the girls' rest room at Warren G. Harding Junior High, Lemuel Travers was embarrassed.

'I think it's that tube that goes from somewhere in the back of the nose to the ear,' he said.

'Huh,' Ms. Prudence MacDonald said, for some reason annoyed that he seemed to know.

They were grected warmly at the TA & VD Society's hospitality suite by the vice-president, public relations, of that body.

'How are you?' said a tall, balding man in a three-hundred-fifty-dollar suit. 'I'm Francis Burns, M.D. Just call me "Dr. Burns."'

'We're from the *Picaroon-Statesman*,' Ace informed him.

'Let me give you some of our literature,' Dr Burns said. 'And an identification badge.' He presented them with a six-inch tall stack of colorfully printed pamphlets. Ace quickly scanned several of the titles: 'Health and Happiness Through Early Vasectomy,' 'Tonsils Must Go!' 'Vasectomy and YOU!,' Adenoids and the Adolescent,' 'How Soon Safe?'

'Very interesting, Doctor,' he said. 'I'm sure these will prove very helpful when I am doing my final research for the article I will write. But for the time being, what we really would like to have is a little information about the president of your organization and a little information about you. Then, perhaps we could visit one of your meetings.'

The president of the TA & VD Society was dismissed with the thirty seconds it took Dr. Burns to relate that he was a doctor of medicine who lived in Wide Prairie, Kansas. It took Dr. Burns five minutes to describe his own background,

which Ace Travers condensed in his notes to one line: 'Burns, Francis, was army doctor in Korea.'

'Doctor,' Ms. Prudence MacDonald said, 'I would like to hear some more about the feminine angle.'

'What exactly, my dear, did you have in mind?' Dr. Burns asked, slightly confused. 'Oh, you were making reference to tonsils and adenoids?'

'I was making reference to vas deferens,' she corrected him sharply. 'What effect do they have on women?'

'Prudence,' Ace said. 'I think we had better be getting along.'

'Cool it,' Prudence said. 'Answer the question, Doctor, if you dare.'

'All data gathered to date seem to suggest, generally speaking, that women are generally pleased with . . . the procedure.'

'Why is that, would you say? How many women have – in your word – undergone the procedure?'

'Actually,' Dr. Burns said, coloring slightly, 'very few. It has been, generally speaking, limited to the male of the species.'

'Aha!' Prudence said triumphantly. 'What's sauce for the gander is not sauce for the goose. Isn't that what you're saying, Doctor?'

'Women,' Doctor Burns said, assuming his best, most confidence-exuding bedside manner, 'are, you see, somewhat *different* from men. You understand, I'm sure.'

'Doctor, how do you *know*, actually know, with your male-chauvinist prejudice that I'm not as afflicted with vas deferens as any man unless I open my mouth and give you a look?'

'Doctor,' Ace Travers said, grabbing Ms. Prudence MacDonald by the arm and propelling her toward the door, 'this has been very . . . instructive . . . and we thank you for your time. But now we must be running along.'

'I've got a good mind to throw you over my shoulder again,' Prudence said in the hall. 'How dare you drag me out of there?'

'Prudence,' Ace said, thinking desperately, 'I'm surprised that you haven't learned by now that the last person a reporter should turn to for the facts is the press agent.'

'I know that,' she said, somewhat, but only somewhat, mollified. 'Now what?'

'Now it's time for us to go see Jungle Jim,' Ace said.

'I'm not through here,' she said. 'But you're right. To hell with the press agent. Let's get to the bottom of this whole male chauvinist outrage.' Before he could stop her, Mrs. Prudence MacDonald twisted free of his grip and burst through a door bearing the sign:

SEMINAR ON TECHNIQUES OF VASECTOMY
ADMISSION RESTRICTED TO FELLOWS OF
THE TA & VD SOCIETY

Ace Travers followed her into the room. It had been set up as a sort of theater, or classroom. A projection screen was at the far end of the room, and a camera, with film ready to roll, was by the door. Next to the screen a lectern had been set up. Their entrance caused a speaker to interrupt himself and frown in their direction.

'May I help you, miss?' the speaker said. And here, thought Ace Travers, is where we get the old heave-ho.

'Sorry to be late, Doctor,' Ms. Prudence MacDonald said. 'But Dr. Travers and I were delayed by Dr. Burns. He insisted on examining my vas deferens.'

There was general, appreciative, warm laughter.

'Old Frankerino Burns is a real card,' the speaker said. 'Please take a seat. I was just in the process of introducing our guest speaker. You haven't missed a thing.'

There was nothing to do but sit down. Ace Travers tried to look properly medical. He had to admit, and his heart warmed at the thought, that Prudence had sneaked their way in here in a really professional manner.

'As I was saying,' the speaker said, 'when our colleagues joined us, Doctor Michaelangelo Fetterizzini, whom I am privileged to call my friend, has long been in the forefront,

the vanguard, of our profession, to which he came after giving up a thriving practice in lipectomological surgery. It is my great honor, indeed my personal privilege, to introduce to you, my colleagues, Michaelangelo Fetterizzini, Fellow of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society.'

As Dr. Fetterizzini made his way, to the applause of his colleagues, to the lectern, Ace Travers leaned over and whispered in Ms. Prudence MacDonald's ear. With his nose close up, he thought that she smelled delightful and that he had seldom seen a more shapely ear. He was so caught up in these thoughts that he almost forgot what he had in mind. Then he remembered:

'What do you say we sneak out of here while the sneakings good?'

'Not on your life,' Prudence said. 'And if you blow in my ear one more time, I'll throw you through that movie screen.'

CHAPTER TEN

'My dear friends,' Dr. Fetterizzini began. He was a short, plump gentleman, generally bereft of hair, whose head barely rose above the lectern. 'I am honored to be here before you. When our friend and colleague, Dr. Frank Burns, our vice-president for public affairs, asked me to be one of the speakers I asked him: "Frank what can I show the guys they haven't seen before?" I mean, after all, fellas, when you've done a couple of these things, you can do them in your sleep. Between us, of course.

'Well, Frank had to agree, of course. So we talked about what I should talk about. He said that possibly, just possibly, I had something which would be of interest to you guys. Ever since I was first in practice, I have been in the habit of making a pre- and post-operative photographic record, using motion pictures, of some of my more interesting surgical

cases. Frank said it was entirely possible that some of you guys had never seen much lipectomological, or rump surgery.'

'What did he say?' Prudence MacDonald asked.

'Beats me,' Ace Travers said. 'He mumbles a lot.'

'So, part of the film – I'm sorry it's silent, fellas, but getting a sound crew in the O.R. poses a lot of difficulties, as you all can understand – will be before and after shots of some of my old lipectomy cases. Frank also said that you would be interested in knowing, and seeing, some of the details of construction and operation of the Fetterizzini Vasectomy Clinic. So there is some film of that, too. And finally, intended to stimulate discussion at the conclusion of the film, there are some films, post operative, of some cases of mine which posed interesting problems. May we have the film, please?'

The lights in the room snapped off. There was a whirring sound from the projector, and then the screen lit up. A picture of a long, rambling, fieldstone building sitting on five acres of grass appeared. The camera first picked up a sign. THE FETTERIZZINI VASECTOMY CLINIC was printed in gold letters eight inches tall.

'This is the old workshop,' Fetterizzini's voice came through the darkness. 'My accountant figured out some very interesting depreciation angles. In case any of you are interested, I'll be glad to discuss them with you later.'

The camera next picked up a black-bodied Rolls-Royce with a white top making its way with great dignity up the winding driveway to the clinic. Dr. Fetterizzini got from behind the wheel, smiled at the camera and made a hospitable gesture for the viewer to come inside.

'Based on the number of patients we handle,' Fetterizzini said, 'we got the IRS to admit that we needed two ambulances. Then we went to another IRS examiner and got him to admit – I had to cut him, free of charge, but what the hell, those guys don't make any money – that, considering the nature of vasectomological surgery, riding in a Rolls was actually more conducive to the patient's well-being than some old, rough-riding Cadillac ambulance would be. And there's nothing in

the rules that says your wife can't ride around in the ambulance when its not otherwise in use. That way, the chauffeur is deductible as an ambulance attendant.'

There was a round of applause at that.

The camera now showed the interior of the clinic. A statuesque blonde in her late thirties smiled at the camera and somewhat self-consciously shook Fetterizzini's hand.

'This is my head nurse,' he said. 'Started out with me years ago. Runs the whole show: scheduling, down payment, the F-Z-Credit Pay Plan, the Professional Man's Collection Agency . . . don't know what I'd do without her.'

The camera followed the blonde and Dr. Fetterizzini through the plushly furnished waiting-room to his office, the most significant feature of which was *Madonna with Child*, a marble statue attributed to Michaelangelo.

Then the camera followed them into the medical treatment area of the clinic. There was a laboratory, equipped with an impressive array of glass flasks, microscopes and two shapely laboratory technicians, and then the camera followed the doctor into a small, white-walled room.

'There are six of these treatment rooms, all identical,' Fetterizzini's voice announced. 'Designed for economical maintenance. One quick push with the floor polisher once a day, and that's it. And after each treatment, by pushing a button, we get a spray of disinfectant which lasts ninety seconds, and this is automatically drawn from the room by an exhaust fan. Hell of a lot cheaper than having some dingbat slop around with a pail of disinfectant and a rag.'

'Question, Doctor?'

'Certainly. Anything you'd like to know. We're all friends here.'

'What do you charge for the procedure?'

'The basic price is two hundred dollars,' Fetterizzini said, 'But by the time we sock them for the pre procedure physical, you know, blood test, urinalysis – I have my own lab, you saw it – and some other stuff, we figure we generally kick them for about two hundred fifty.'

'Very nice,' someone said in obvious appreciation. 'Mostly cash?'

'We'll take cash, of course,' Fetterizzini said, 'if somebody insists. But we don't push it. What the hell, if the department stores can make eighteen percent annual on unpaid accounts, why shouldn't we get ours? We do ask for a twenty-five-dollar-cash down payment.'

'Why that figure?'

'We figure that's the gross cost. After that, everything's gravy.'

'Good thinking!' a hardy, gruff voice said.

'We figure the average procedure takes fifteen minutes from the minute the patient steps into the treatment until he's ready to go home,' Fetterizzini said. 'That's four an hour. But sometimes, when things go right, I can do five, even six. We promise that nobody has to wait more than fifteen minutes, and we can generally live up to it. We schedule two or three weeks in advance.

'We start at nine, right on the nose, and we quit at one, right on the nose. Most lawyers – and I play mostly with lawyers – can't get to the golf course before two, anyway, so that gives me a chance to have a little lunch before teeing up.'

'And you have no one in practice with you?' a voice from the dark asked.

'Who needs anyone? I can handle from sixteen to eighteen patients a day on the average. That's eighty or ninety a week – I think the actual figure averages out to eighty-three point six. That's enough for me, I'm not greedy.'

The camera, all this time, had been poking into each of the six treatment rooms of the Fetterizzini Clinic, and they were, indeed, all identically furnished, even to the nurses, who were all young, attractive and amply bosomed.

The camera now followed Dr Fetterizzini back out the clinic and into his Rolls-Royce. With a merry wave of his hand, he drove off down the drive. His colleagues in New Orleans applauded.

'Stout fellow!' someone said; there were general murmurs of approval.

THE END flashed on the screen. There were a few seconds of unidentifiable imagery on the screen, something almost, Ace Travers thought, psychedelic, and then the picture cleared. Ace at first thought it was a photograph of the surface of the moon, but then the camera pulled back quickly and he saw that the object in question was the left cheek of a human buttocks. It was the largest and ugliest buttocks he had ever seen; there was something compellingly fascinating about it.

The camera pulled back even farther and examined the buttocks, now both of them, with loving detailed interest.

'I really hated to give up lipectomy,' Dr. Fetterizzini said with obvious feeling. 'I found it very rewarding, in a professional sense, if not very rewarding financially. The question I was finally forced to ask myself was where could I do the most good for the most people, and for myself, in the least time, and the answer, obviously, was not in lipectomy.

'This is, of course, a pre-operative shot,' he went on. 'just to give you an idea of the problems I faced.'

The image on the screen suddenly changed. The object now exhibited was the same human buttocks, now greatly reduced in size and with neat rows of sutures, looking like some Boy Scout's first attempt to hook a rug, showing where the incision had been made and how it had been closed.

Ace Travers, who had unconsciously put his right hand to the side of his head, now peered through spread fingers at Ms. Prudence MacDonald. She was staring at the screen, eyes wide.

'Prudence,' Ace asked, *sotto voce*, 'you want to take off?'

She didn't answer him; she just sat up straight, staring at the screen. Ace reminded himself that Prudence had shown that she was a true newsperson by the way she had gained access for them to this inner sanctum of the priests of the healing art. He was a little embarrassed that he had even thought she would want to leave.

'This shot is immediately post-operative,' Dr. Fetteriz-

zini's voice told his audience. 'You'll notice the incision was made on the lower curve of the rump, where, upon recovery, the scar will be least noticeable.'

The screen image changed again. It was the same rump, but now, in the high-quality color reproduction of the Kodachrome II film, the black-and-blue (and here, somewhat purplish) discoloration to the epidermis which normally occurs following a surgical procedure was visible in all its chromatic glory.

'This is three days post-operative,' Dr. Fetterizzini explained. 'You'll notice that about half the sutures have been removed, I like to get some of the stitches out as soon as I can, so that the scar doesn't look like a zipper.'

The imagery changed again. The screen now showed a woman, a rather chubby woman, in her late forties or early fifties. She was sitting in a chrome-and-plastic armchair in a hospital room, smoking a cigarette, wearing her jewelry and dressed in a high-collared, rather ornate dressing gown. She was also wearing a mask over her eyes. The mask was covered with sequins. The effect was that she had somehow strayed from a costume party to which she had gone dressed as Marie Antoinette.

She flashed the camera a shy, perhaps even coy, little smile. Then she walked up to the camera, turned around, and, with a rather graceful gesture, hoisted her dressing gown high enough above her waist so that her ample derrière, which had just been minimized, was on display. Then she walked away from the camera. She stopped, as if someone in the room had spoken to her. When she resumed walking, she did so with a side-to-side movement of this object, reminiscent of the walk of the late Marilyn Monroe.

'I was proud of that one,' Dr. Fetterizzini's voice came out of the darkness. 'Notice the muscular control. She could never have shaken it like that before.'

'And well you should have been,' a hard male voice said. He began to applaud and, instantly, the others joined.

As if acknowledging the applause, the masked lady on the

screen dropped her dressing gown, turned to face the camera and lowered herself ladylike into the chair. She nodded at the camera and smiled.

Five other photographic records of Dr. Fetterizzini's skill as a lipectomological surgeon followed. Ace Travers sat there in complete fascination. He was absolutely struck dumb.

There came again on the screen the psychedelic display of white and black which, his professional journalist's eye told him, indicated the end of that particular segment of the film and the beginning of a new one.

There suddenly appeared on the screen, again in Kodachrome's splendid reproduction of the full color spectrums, a picture of a naked, skinny, hairy male seated in a chair in what was obviously a hospital room. The man was in his late twenties or early thirties. His hair was cut long in a fashionable manner, and he had both sideburns and a flowing moustache. He was, in fact, the sort of man whose image (rather than Richard Nixon's) came to Ace Travers mind's eye when the term 'used car salesman' was used.

Ace sat up a little straighter. He was not that unused to seeing naked men, but what really attracted and held Ace's attention was the object in the man's lap, which he held tenderly, even lovingly, with both hands. It looked like an under-inflated purple basketball. Since that was rather unlikely, Ace decided that it really was a misshapen, discolored watermelon.

And then the man stood up, still holding, tenderly, lovingly, the object he had held on his lap. Ace realized with a sudden, chilling horror that it wasn't a misshapen watermelon after all.

'This was rather interesting,' Dr. Fetterizzini's voice announced. 'I apparently got a little careless and nipped a teensy-weensy little vein. As I recall, I was in a little bit of a hurry that day. Anyway, what happened was that I opened the vein and didn't notice that I had, which, as we all know, happens to everybody once in a while.

'Well, the patient had a not unusual psychological reac-

tion to the procedure. He went out, in other words, and tied one on. Really tied one on. He told me later that he had drunk as much as he could as fast as he could. He made it home and passed out. The damned little vein, meanwhile, is going drip, drip, drip. The blood, of course, could not coagulate, as it wasn't exposed to air. You'd never think, to look at it, that that little bag of tissue could swell up that much, would you?

'Sometime during the night, the patient rolled over onto his stomach in his sleep. His screams brought the janitor of his apartment house to him, and the janitor had the good sense to call the clinic. If he had called General Hospital, as you can well imagine, it would have been rather awkward.

'I rushed right over, of course – first house call I'd made in ten years, which shows you the degree of my interest – and sedated him and got him over to the clinic. . . .'

Ace didn't hear the rest of Dr. Fetterizzini's fascinating case history. He was suddenly ashamed by the knowledge that he was sitting there, right beside Ms. Prudence MacDonald, with both of his hands cupped protectively over his groin and groaning piteously in sympathy.

With an effort, he forced his hands away from his crotch and hooked them, their fingers still stiffly bent, over his knees. He straightened as well as he could, fixed a rather stiff smile on his face and turned to see if Prudence had noticed his shameful, unprofessional reaction.

Prudence MacDonald hadn't noticed, because Prudence MacDonald was gone from the seat beside Ace Travers. It was entirely possible, Ace decided, that he had suddenly been struck blind, or had completely lost his senses, so he stretched out a hand to see if she was there. He had read what tricks a man's mind will play on him in times of terrible stress. But all Ace's probing hand encountered was Prudence's two cameras and the large accessory bag.

Prudence, Ace slowly realized, had had the good sense to flee from this gathering of gleeful maniacs. He picked up

her cameras and the accessory bag and dashed out of the room, back into the hotel corridor.

Francis Burns, M.D., seeing the reporter in the corridor, advanced on him with what he thought of as his most comradely smile.

'Hello, there,' he said. 'Is there anything else I can do for you?'

'Stay away from me!' Ace Travers shouted and ran down the corridor. In his haste, he had run in the opposite direction from the elevators. Well, there was nothing that could be done about that. He came to the end of the corridor, opened the window and descended down the fire escape, with what dignity he could muster, to Bourbon Street.

He immediately re-entered the hotel, searched the lobby for Prudence, failed to find her and went into the Treasure Room Bar.

'Hello, Ace,' the bartender said. 'Got a message for you.'

'Huh?'

'Absolute doll just run in here, stacked like a brick—'

'Watch it, Charley!'

'Well, she is,' Charley said. 'Anyway, she said when you came in here, to tell you that she hopes you will have the decency never to speak to her again.'

'Oh,' Ace said.

'Struck out again, huh, Ace? Jesus, what did you do to her? Or try to do? She was as white as a ghost.'

'It wasn't what you're thinking, Charley.' Ace said.

'You ought to know better than to try them cavemen tactics these days,' the bartender said.

'Just make me a drink, Charley,' Ace said. 'And shut up.'

'Yes, sir,' Charley said, his feelings hurt. 'What would you like, sir? Bourbon? Scotch? Perhaps a Sazerac cocktail?'

'Yeah,' Ace said.

'Which?'

'All three,' Ace said.

Ten minutes later, Ace felt a little better. He realized

that he was still firmly clutching Prudence's cameras and accessory bag, and that reminded him that he was on duty.

'Hand me the phone, Charley,' he said. He asked the operator to ring the suite occupied by the Reverend Dr. Alms-worth Cody. There was no answer. He wasn't sure whether he was pleased or disappointed. It was entirely likely that some religious counseling was just what he needed.

'Where's the K of C wingding?' Ace asked.

'Jean Lafitte Pirate's Cove Room,' Charley said. 'You better hurry, Ace. They already had one riot.'

As a gentleman, the least he could do, Ace decided, would be to cover the K of C reception for Prudence. He could work a camera and Manny the Crum would not have to know that Prudence had run off.

He had another quick bourbon to give him enough courage to make it across the lobby of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, and then, looking neither to the left nor right, walked quickly to the closed door of the Pirate's Cove Room.

A very large Jesuit seminarian, a former linebacker of the New Orleans Saints, stood at the closed door.

'May I have your invitation please, sir?' he asked.

'I'm from the *Piracoon-Statesman*,' Ace said.

'I'm afraid you'll have to have an invitation, sir,' the seminarian said.

'You don't understand,' Ace said. 'I'm here to write a story about the riot . . . I mean, the reception.'

'I understand all right,' the seminarian said. 'You ain't got no invite. So you ain't gonna get in. Now, beat it before I make you eat those cameras.'

At that moment, Monsignor Clancy opened the door, for what purpose Ace was never to learn.

'Why, hello there, Lemuel,' the monsignor said. 'How nice to see you.'

'I can't get in, Monsignor,' Ace said. 'Can you fix that?'

'Why, of course,' Monsignor Clancy said. 'This gentleman is from the fourth estate, son. He's here to write a little story about the reception.'

The seminarian, with obvious reluctance, stepped out of the way. Ace stepped into the Pirate's Cove Room. He was somewhat disppointed. There was neither a riot in progress nor did one look immediately imminent. The Knights and their ladies were all sitting down in folding chairs. Standing in front of the head table was a choir of nuns singing – creditably – what was apparently a medley of old Irish airs.

Ace looked hard, but he couldn't find a Chinese archbishop, or, for that matter, a Chinaman, period, or an archbishop, period, not even the local one. He thought for a moment that Manny the Crum had gotten a bum tip and that the Bayou Perdu Council had not been invited to participate in whatever was going on here. That would certainly be understandable.

But then, as the nuns' choir came to the conclusion of one number and paused before starting another, there came a sharp, piercing whistle. Ace located the whistler. He was in full uniform with tricornered hat slightly askew, standing in the middle of the seated Knights and their ladies. In answer to his whistle, a quart bottle of Old White Stagg Blended Kentucky Bourbon came sailing through the air. No doubt about it. The Bayou Perdu Council was present. The Knight with the slightly askew hat snagged the flying bottle neatly out of the air and sat down.

'Ah,' a voice cried in the quaint accent of the bayou country, 'What *you* know 'bout shameful behavior, you old cow? *My wife* wear more clothes when she take a bath than you got on now.'

Ace put Prudence's camera to his eye. He had arrived just in time; the riot was only now about to start.

But there was no riot. A half-dozen black-suited young men, wearing clerical collars, and about the same size as the seminarian who had tried to keep Ace out of the reception, moved quickly into the seated Knights and their ladies. What exactly they did Ace couldn't see. But there were no drawn swords, no colorful Irish, descriptive Italian or piquant French

ethnic insults not even *one* dropped-melon sound of fist crashing on jaw. Peace reigned

The choir began to sing again. Ace was disappointed. No Chinaman, no archbishop, no riot and no Prudence. Some days you really shouldn't bother to get out of bed.

The choir ended their performance with an encore rendition of 'The Rose of Tralee' and then, to thunderous applause, filed out of the room. Shamed at the very thought, Ace blamed the booze for affecting his vision. If he didn't know better, he would have sworn that at least three of the nuns were pregnant.

Finally, when it became apparent that the nuns were not going to provide a second encore, no matter what the level, or length, of the applause, stamped feet and shrill whistles, the noise in the room diminished.

Monsignor John Joseph Clancy stood up and called for attention by raising his arms widely, in the manner of certain politicians.

'My dear friends,' he began.

'Bring back duh broads!' someone called. He was stilled by a lethal look from His Eminence, the archbishop of New Orleans, who rose to his feet. Monsignor Clancy waited until the archbishop had sat down again and then continued.

'We are gathered here tonight to pay our respects to His Eminence John Patrick Mulcahy, archbishop of Swengchan,' he said. 'And the archbishop has graciously agreed to address a few words to us.'

The archbishop of Swengchan stood up. Ace was disappointed again. He wasn't a Chinaman after all.

'Your Eminence,' Mulcahy began. 'Ladies and Knights, Friends. It it a great pleasure for me to be here tonight. I am grateful to you all, not only for this fine reception and the splendid entertainment, but for putting me together again with an old and dear friend of mine.'

Ace's ears perked. Maybe there would be a story in that. He put Prudence's camera to his eye and started to take pictures.

'When I first met Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux,' Mulcahy went on, 'he was a young soldier who had just suffered grievous wounds on the battlefields of Korea. Your archbishop told me tonight that he hadn't known, until I told him, that our mutual friend Horsey Chevaux was three times decorated for valor.'

It came, to judge from the shocked silence in the room, as something of a shock to a lot of other people, too.

'He told me, of course, of Horsey's generosity to Catholic Charities in the diocese and to other good causes,' Mulcahy went on. 'And of his devotion to the Knights of Columbus. I would simply like to add this: I had occasion to watch Horsey's courage in the face of great pain. And I want you to know that I am as proud to call him my dear friend as you are to claim him as one of your fellow Knights.'

The archbishop of Swengchan sat down.

There was a strange silence in the room. No one seemed to know exactly what to do.

All of a sudden, Horsey Chevaux was on his feet.

'With all due respect to the archbishop,' he said. 'He's got the story wrong. I didn't do nothing in the army that a lot of other guys didn't do. I tell you about the archbishop, and I introduce you to two of the finest goddamned doctors and the best goddamned nurse was ever in the whole goddamned U.S. Army.'

'Sit down, Horsey,' the archbishop of Swengchan said sharply.

But Horsey was not to be silenced. Instead of sitting down, he clambered onto the top of the table.

'If it wasn't for these people,' he said, waving his hand at Hawkeye, Trapper and Hot Lips, 'Horsey Chevaux would not be here tonight. Horsey would be pushing up the daisies someplace.'

The room was absolutely silent. Horsey interpreted this to mean that he wasn't being entirely believed.

'I show you, goddamn it!' Horsey said. He started jumping up and down on the table on one leg. The ice-sculpture

crucifix, which had been quietly melting ever since the doors to the Pirate's Cove Room had opened, teetered and then fell over.

A nervous, female, tittering laugh broke the silence.

'You tink dat's funny, huh, you dumb broad?' Horsey challenged. 'Goddamn, I show you how funny my leg is.' He unfastened his ceremonial belt, and the belt, which held his ceremonial sword in its scabbard, fell away from him. The gold sash followed.

'Horsey!' the archbishop of Swengchan said. 'Don't you dare!'

Monsignor Clancy made an attempt to get Horsey off the table. Horsey shoved him, perhaps a little harder than he intended, or was necessary, and Monsignor Clancy went flying.

With surprising grace (probably, Ace thought, the result of a lifetime's experience standing up poling a pirogue through Bayou Perdu), balancing himself first on one leg and then on the other, Horsey pulled his uniform trousers off.

'Take a look at dat!' Horsey said, pointing dramatically in the general direction of his groin. 'What you tink about dat, huh?'

Two of the ladies screamed in outraged modesty. The six-foot six seminarian who had come to the cloth from back of the line of the New Orleans Saints charged across the floor and removed Horsey bodily from the tabletop. The Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, rose as one man to defend their leader.

Ace Travers fought his way to the door, made it safely against all odds and set out at a dead run for the *Picaroon-Statesman*. It wasn't every day that someone stood up on a table in the presence of two archbishops and took off his pants. If he didn't win another prize with a photograph of that, then there was no justice.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Mrs. Louise Burns (Mrs. Francis J.) sat on the arm of a couch in their suite in the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, her arms folded under her breasts, her legs crossed, the upper one swinging back and forth, and glowered at her husband.

She was dressed to go out. The neatly printed 'Schedule for the Second Day' of the fifth annual national convention of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society called for a husbands and wives breakfast, and they were going to be late for it.

The reason they were going to be late for it was that Dr. Burns was making out his daily report of business expenses. Doctor Burns, who was both methodical by nature and frightened silly of the Internal Revenue Service, had long ago formed the habit of, as he put it, 'putting every damned dime down on paper.'

To this end, he carried a little notebook in his breast pocket in which he carefully noted every expenditure he made during the day. His first act upon arising was to transfer the previous day's expenditure to the permanent ledger, which was ultimately turned over to his certified private accountant.

This required, on Dr. Burns's part the exercise of a good deal of imagination. He smoked cigarettes, for example. Cigarettes, in addition to being dangerous to health are not considered a bona fide business expense by the IRS. His daily record of expenses, therefore, recorded not 'One Pack of Cigarettes: 55c but 'Charitable Contribution, Little Sisters of the Poor: 55c.' Newspapers were recorded as 'Professional Books and Papers,' caddy fees as 'Physical Therapist's Fee' and so on.

He was, at the moment, stuck. The previous evening, after a few drinks with his fellows of the TA & VD Society (listed

as 'Refreshments, Professional Seminar'), it had seemed to be a splendid idea to hire, even if it was raining, one of the horse-drawn, open-air, tourist carriages parked in front of the hotel for a tour of the French Quarter. He was torn between listing this as 'Transportation Expense (in connection with duties as public affairs officer, TA & VD Society)' or as 'Transportation Expense (between hotel and place of professional seminar).' He finally settled on the latter, which would logically lead into the next listed expense ($54.50 spent at the Hotsie-Totsie Club, which was then featuring 'Boobsie Baker in Her Bubble Bath') and which he had already penciled in as 'Expenses in Connection with Mammary Examination Seminar.'

'How long are you going to be?' Mrs. Burns asked icily.

'Read the newspaper, for God's sake,' Frank Burns, M.D., snapped. 'And stop bugging me.' It was a snap decision he would come to regret, for Mrs. Burns, breaking a long tradition, did precisely what her husband ordered her to do. She slid off the arm of the sofa onto the cushions and picked up the *Picaroon-Statesman*, which had been delivered with the complimentary continental breakfast. The complimentary continental breakfast, which had been one of the main reasons the Old Royal Maison New Orleans had gotten the TA & VD Society convention, had turned out to be a cup of ersatz coffee (something called chicory) and a holeless doughnut covered with a thick layer of confectioner's sugar.

'I guess,' Frank Burns had said, after he had managed to clear the confectioner's sugar from his throat and stop coughing, 'that there's no such thing as a free breakfast.'

His wife, who had not answered him, flipped through the newspaper quickly, her eyes running up and down the columns of type. She finally found, on page twelve of section five, beside a dental adhesive ad, what she was looking for.

SURGEONS CONVENE IN CRESCENT CITY

NEW ORLEANS – The American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society is holding their fifth annual convention this week in the Old Royal Maison New Orleans.

According to Francis Burns, M.D., a former army doctor and now the organization's social secretary, the group chose to meet in New Orleans because of the Crescent City's reputation as both a 'fun place' and somewhere where his associates could mix business with pleasure. He said he was especially looking forward to seeing both New Orleans's 60,000-seat, wholly enclosed and air conditioned sports arena with guarded parking for 20,000 cars and New Orleans's famed and picturesque garden district, featuring charming homes of another, more dignified, era.

Mrs. Burns, of course, had no way of knowing that the story was known as 'Stock Convention Story No. 3' by Manny the Crum and his staff at the *Picaroon-Statesman*. By inserting a new lead paragraph and making a few minor changes to the first sentences of the second paragraph, the story could be (and indeed was) used again and again for what Manny the Crum decided were third-rate conventions.

'Why do you want to see the sports arena, Frank?' she asked.

'What?' he snapped.

'It says here in the paper you're especially looking forward to seeing the new sports arena.'

'What sports arena? What are you mumbling about now?'

'It says right here in the paper that you're "especially looking forward to seeing the new sixty thousand seat sports arena" ' his wife responded, now a bit testily.

'Let me see that!' he said, getting up from the desk and stalking over to snatch the paper from her hands. He read the story carefully. 'Funny, I don't remember saying any-

thing like that,' he said. And then he began to read the story again, more carefully.

'Goddamn!' he said. 'They've got my name backwards!' He threw the paper in disgust onto the couch. 'You just can't believe what you read in the papers anymore,' he said. 'There ought to be a law.'

'Are we going to the garden district?' Mrs. Burns asked. 'That sounds like fun.'

'What garden district?' Frank Burns asked. 'Louise, for God's sake, leave me alone!'

Mrs. Burns picked up the paper again, this time turning her attention to the front page.

There was a three-column headline on the lower right side of the front page and, underneath it, a three-column photograph.

J.-P. de la CHEVAUX REVEALED AS WAR HERO; REUNITED WITH ARCHBISHOP MULCAHY AND OTHER KOREAN WAR COMRADES IN CRESCENT CITY

By Lemuel Travers
Award-winning *Picaroon-Statesman*
Staff Writer

Photos by
Ms. Prudence MacDonald
Picaroon-Statesman Staff Photoperson

NEW ORLEANS --Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, well-known Louisiana industrialist, sportsman, philanthropist, and chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the Chevaux Oil Production and Development Company, was revealed last night to be a hero of the Korean War by His Eminence John Patrick Mulcahy, archbishop of Swengchan.

Until the archbishop's dramatic announcement, which brought the New Orleans Consistory of the Knights of Columbus to their feet in tumultuous response, Mr. Chev-

aux's wartime heroism had not been generally known. Archbishop Mulcahy related how Mr. Chevaux, then an infantry sergeant, had been severely wounded leading his men up Heartbreak Ridge. The archbishop at the time was an army chaplain.

Mr. Chevaux, typically modest and unassuming, was visibly distressed that the story had come out. When called upon to speak, he insisted that if there were any heroes, they were the two army surgeons and the army nurse who saved his leg from what seemed to be a certain amputation.

The surgeons, Benjamin Franklin Pierce and John F. X. McIntyre, who are in New Orleans at a medical convention, had only minutes before been reunited with Archbishop Mulcahy, who was being honored by the New Orleans Consistory, Knights of Columbus, at the Old Royal Maison New Orleans. Neither the doctors nor the archbishop had seen Mr. de la Chevaux since Korea and had no idea that he would be present, in his role as Supreme Grand Knight Commander of the Bayou Perdu Council, Knights of Columbus, at the reception.

In an emotion-charged scene, at first somewhat confusing to the others present, Mr. de la Chevaux and Archbishop Mulcahy first recognized one another and then greeted each other with great warmth and affection.

Mr. de la Chevaux later took to the speaker's table to discuss in some detail the seriousness of his wound and to reveal how deeply he was scarred. The Knights of Columbus and their ladies were so fascinated that it became necessary to summon police assistance to maintain order.

The *Picaroon-Statesman* later learned, exclusively, that Mr. de la Chevaux plans a press conference, either this afternoon or tomorrow morning (depending on the state of his health; he was visibly shaken by the emotional events of the evening and was forced to take to his bed), at which he will announce the endowment by the Chevaux Foundation of the Archbishop Mulcahy Memorial Surgical Hos-

pital to be built in Swengchan, China. (More photos on pages 11 and 12).

(The story, as printed, was not the story Ace Travers turned in to Manny the Crum. Ace's simple, blunt reporting had resulted in a story which was slanted the wrong way, Manny the Crum decided, especially in light of his knowledge that Beauregard Beaucoupmots, publisher of the *Picaroon-Statesman*, was not only a devout Roman Catholic but also into Horsey Chevaux for nearly a million and a half. Besides, he rationalized, Horsey Chevaux causing one more riot really wasn't news; Horsey Chevaux as a hero was something else. Manny the Crum rewrote the story himself.)

'Frank,' Mrs. Burns asked. 'When you were in the army, didn't you used to know a doctor named Pierce?'

A look of shock crossed Dr. Burns's face. Not believing what he had heard, he shook his head, as if he were trying to clear his ears.

'What did you say?' he asked.

'I said, when you were in the army, didn't you serve with a doctor Pierce?'

'What makes you ask that? I don't recall mentioning his name to you.'

'You talked a lot in your sleep when you first came home, Frank,' Mrs. Burns said. 'You talked about a Captain Pierce and a Captain McIntyre and about your commanding officer.'

'Colonel Blake?' Dr. Burns asked, his voice somehow strained and weak.

'Major Houlihan was the name you used to say in your sleep,' Mrs. Burns said.

'I asked you why you were suddenly bringing this up, Louise,' Dr. Burns said with as much sternness as he could muster under the circumstances.

'Well, he's in the paper, too,' Louise Burns said. 'There's a story about some Korean War hero and them and an archbishop. An Archbishop Mulcahy.'

'*Archbishop* Mulcahy?' Frank Burns asked with disbelief.

He got up from the desk, walked quickly to the couch and again snatched the *Picaroon-Statesman* from his wife's hands.

He read the story and then looked at the additional photos on pages eleven and twelve. There was no doubt about it Doctors Pierce and McIntyre were as he remembered them, grinning from ear to ear and clutching the neck of a whiskey bottle.

One photograph showed them with their arms draped around the shoulder of a man in an ornate uniform, complete to cocked hat and sword. Frank Burns remembered him, too, or thought he did. Hawkeye had decided that the best way to conceal a patient from prying eyes, as he had had to do in order to keep Horsey Chevaux at the 4077th MASH, was to let it be known that he was a general suffering from gonorrhea. Nobody in the army, of whatever rank, is going to ask a major general with the clap how he feels. Major General Mullins, whom Frank Burns recognized, was, of course, ex-sergeant Horsey de la Chevaux.

'Are they old friends, Frank?' Mrs. Burns asked.

'Uhhhhh,' Frank Burns said noncommittally and suddenly rushed to his attaché case from which he took the membership list of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society. He scanned it quickly, and there they were, listed in the proper alphabetical order: McIntyre, John F.X., and Pierce, Benjamin F.

It was a situation, Frank Burns realized, fraught with danger to all those things he held dear: The Burns Loving Family and Zero Population Growth Clinic, his ambition to become president of the TA & VDS, his professional reputation and his marriage. To solve the problem would require calm thought and, he realized, courageous action. He would follow the old military adage that the best defense is a good offense. He would go to Hawkeye and Trapper John and face it like a man, getting down on his knees and begging, if that was what was required, to keep them from making

public his Korean war relationship with Major Margaret 'Hot Lips' Houlihan. He might even be able to keep it from coming out that he was not, as he led people to believe, actually chief surgeon of the 4077th MASH and personal medical adviser to General Douglas MacArthur.

What was important was that Louise didn't find out about Hot Lips, for if Louise did find out about her, the rest of the world would know about it, too, in about fifteen minutes.

'Louise,' he said as solemnly as he could, 'I'm glad you brought this to my attention. Obviously, Doctors Pierce and McIntyre haven't wanted to impose on our friendship because of my position within TA & VDS. I'll go to them now and let them know I haven't forgotten our service together in the service of our country.'

'Can I go?' Louise Burns asked.

'I don't think that would be wise,' Burns said. 'To tell you the truth, Louise, and far be it from me to cast aspersions on a fellow of the TA & VDS, they are sometimes taken to drink, and the language they use when they have been at the bottle is not fit for your ears.'

He picked up the telephone.

'This is Dr. Burns,' he announced. 'Would you please connect me with Dr. Hawkeye . . . I mean Benjamin F. Pierce?'

The telephone was answered on the sixth ring.

'What did she have? Is everything all right?' It was the well, if not fondly, remembered voice of Hawkeye Pierce.

'Why, hello there, Dr. Pierce. This is Dr. Frank Burns.'

'Oh, God, this has to be some maniac's idea of a practical joke.'

'I'd like very much to see you, old friend,' Burns said. The hotel telephone switchboard, at that moment, apparently experienced some difficulty. There was a click and then a hum on the line. 'I'll come right over, if that's convenient,' Burns finished. He saw his wife's eyes on him. He spoke again to the dead telephone: 'Not at all, old friend. I've been meaning to look you up just as soon as I had a free moment.'

He put the telephone back in its cradle, smiled wanly at his wife and walked out of their suite.

Hawkeye had come awake instantly at the first ring of the telephone and reached out for it on the bed-side table. It wasn't there. He remembered vaguely that the previous evening (come to think of it, that same morning) Trapper John had put the telephone someplace where it would not disturb his rest should it ring.

That should not have affected his own telephone, Hawkeye thought, because they had a two-bedroom-plus-sitting-room suite, and Trapper John's having hid his telephone should not have made Hawkeye's telephone disappear. The mystery was solved when he noticed Trapper John, wearing the full dress regalia of a Knight Commander of the Golden Fleece of the Knights of Columbus, including the hat and sword, was now sharing his bed.

Trapper looked, Hawkeye thought, like a Revolutionary War naval hero about to go down with his ship after having suffered a fatal wound. He put that thought from his mind as the telephone rang again. He got out of bed, took a step toward the door to the sitting room, where he remembered seeing another telephone, and fell flat on his face, having tripped over his scabbard. He got to his feet, caught a fleeting glimpse of himself in a mirror wearing what appeared to be the uniform of a Polish vice-admiral and marched, somewhat unsteadily, to the door of the sitting room.

When he pulled the door open, he was greeted with what sounded like the roar of a pride of sick old lions and a thick wave of horrible odor that seemed to confirm that he had somehow blundered into a lion's den. The smoke cleared after a moment, however, and he was able to see that it wasn't a pride of lions after all, but a substantial delegation of the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, asleep and snoring, on the couch, on the coffee table, in armchairs and on the floor.

The phone rang again. Hawkeye stiffened, trying to locate it by the sound of the bell. The phone was nowhere in sight.

It rang again, and he was able to determine its general direction. It rang still again, and now he was able to locate it more precisely. The sound of the bell seemed to be coming from behind a stack of cases of Old White Stagg Blended Kentucky Bourbon. Somewhat frantically, he dug for it and found it just as it rang a sixth time.

Even in his condition, he was able to recall, in finite detail, all that he had learned at medical school about the problems of human delivery. There was absolutely no question whatever in his mind that the telephone call would be for him and that it would be Spearchucker calling from the maternity ward of the Spruce Harbor Medical Center with bad news.

It was even worse than that. It was some maniac of a practical joker announcing himself as Dr. Frank Burns. He hung up in anger and then the full, horrible possibility that it actually was Frank Burns struck him. He picked up the phone again.

'Is there a Dr. Frank Burns registered?' he asked.

'Yes, sir,' the operator said after a moment. 'Shall I ring him?'

'God, no!' Hawkeye said and hung up. He leaned against the stacked cases of Old White Stagg and rubbed his eyes.

'Doctor?' a voice called piteously, in great pain. He looked around the room. One of Horsey's admirals was crawling toward him on all fours. 'Doc, I think I'm gonna die,' he said.

Hawkeye examined him carefully. Then he reached behind him, tore open a case and handed the man a quart bottle of Old White Stagg. 'Take four ounces of this and call me in the morning,' he said. After a moment's thought, he reached into the case again and brought out a bottle for himself.

'Physician heal thyself!' he said and then tipped it up.

He was in that position when, following a perfunctory knock, the door opened and Frank Burns, M.D., fellow, TA & VD Society, stepped into the room.

'My God!' Burns said, seeing the carnage and the bodies strewn all over.

'What may I do for you, my son?' Hawkeye said sonorously.

'Well, well, well,' Burns said. 'If it isn't my old friend Ben Pierce.'

'My name is Pierce, but I can't seem to recall ever being a friend of yours,' Hawkeye said. 'If you've come to clean the room, you'll have to come back later.'

'You don't recognize me?' Burns asked.

'Of course, I recognize you,' Hawkeye said. 'And I remember telling you I don't need any more life insurance.' He picked up the telephone again. 'Operator, this is Dr. Pierce in five seventeen. I would like to speak to Dr. Oliver Wendell Jones at the Spruce Harbor, Maine, Medical Center. I'll stay on the line.'

There was a certain communicative problem between the New Orleans telephone operator and the Spruce Harbor Medical Center operator, neither quite willing to believe the other was actually speaking English, but finally New Orleans managed to convey to Maine the idea that Dr. Pierce wished to speak to Dr. Jones.

'Spearchucker ain't here,' Maine said. 'But there's a message for Hawkeye.'

'Sir,' New Orleans said, 'if you can tell me what language that is, I will see if our overseas operator can translate for us.'

'What's the message?' Hawkeye asked, heart in his throat.

' "No news is good news," ' the operator said. ' "Get off my back." '

Hawkeye slammed the phone down in its cradle and fixed Frank Burns with a cold eye.

'You still here?' he demanded.

Frank Burns opened his mouth, but there was no chance for him to find the reply he was searching for.

The door to the second bedroom opened and Horsey de la Chevaux appeared, somewhat the worse for wear.

'Why, General Mullins,' Frank Burns said. 'How nice to see you again.'

Except for the two years in which he had been in the army, Horsey had spent all of his life on Bayou Perdu. Since he was in diapers, Horsey had formed the habit of meeting certain calls of nature by standing in the nearest open window, an unsanitary practice in a city but a perfectly sanitary and even logical procedure in the shack, and later the mansion, on Bayou Perdu, both of which were built on pilings set in four feet of tidal water.

Horsey had retired at ten minutes past five that morning, full of warm emotional experience and two quarts, give or take a pint, of Old White Stagg Blended Kentucky Bourbon. It was not surprising, therefore, that he was somewhat confused when he woke to the sound of a ringing telephone and believed himself to be in his own home. After all, suite 517, like Horsey's mansion, now was equipped with stacked cases of Old White Stagg, wall-to-wall drunks and ceiling-to-floor french doors. Horsey went to the latter, swung it wide, began to attend to a call of nature and turned his head over his shoulder.

'Hawkeye, I think I know dat sonofagoon, too,' he said about Dr. Frank Burns. 'I don't know *where* I knows him, but I knows he's a sonofagoon.'

'General Mullins!' Frank Burns said, his voice shocked. 'What are you doing?'

'What it look like I'm doing?' Horsey asked incredulously. 'Hey, Hawkeye, who the guy in bed wit me?'

Frank Burns, M.D., who had been told at age nine, and had believed faithfully ever since, that a man is judged by the company he keeps, fled the suite without another word.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A black Chevrolet sedan, bearing Louisiana license plates turned off Rue Royale onto Bourbon Street and came to a halt in front of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans. The passenger and driver's side doors opened at the same time, and two enormous men got out. They were neatly dressed in dark suits, with snap-brim hats, and they were clean and freshly shaven. But there was something about them which suggested they were no strangers to violence and something else about them which suggested that few people ever argued with them, or put obstacles in their path.

It was a no-parking zone, of course, in front of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, but the policeman on the corner after one quick glance apparently decided that the flow of traffic demanded his full attention and that citing illegally parked cars would have to wait until another time.

'Watch the car, will ya?' the taller of the two said to the Old Royal Maison New Orleans' doorman.

'My pleasure!' the doorman said, smiling ear to ear and making a little bow.

They went, one at a time, through the double glass doors which normally could accommodate two or three people at a time. The smaller, heavier man reached into the side pocket of his dark suit and took out a small piece of paper.

'Five seventeen,' he said to the taller man, who grunted. They strode purposefully to the elevator and stepped inside, causing a small concerned stir among the other passengers, even though they both politely removed their hats, revealing closely cropped hair, and held them in their hands.

'Five please,' the smaller man croaked to the elevator operator.

'Yes, sir,' the elevator operator said enthusiastically. 'Five it is, sir. And directly, with no intermediate stops.'

There were no complaints from the other passengers as the elevator rose past their intended floors without stopping. To

a man (and two women) they wore polite little smiles, as if riding past their floors was a pleasant little excursion indeed.

'Here you are, gentlemen,' the elevator operator said. 'Five. The fifth floor. I hope your trip has been as pleasant for you as it has been for me.'

'Thanks,' the smaller, black-suited gentleman croaked. They stepped outside the elevator, examined the sign on the wall giving directions to the various rooms on the floor and then strode purposefully (one after the other, the hallway not being quite wide enough to accommodate them side by side) toward suite 517.

The taller man knocked lightly on the door with his knuckle. The doorframe trembled, and the door itself, vibrating like a drumhead, made the sound of his gentle knock clearly audible throughout suite 517. In one bedroom, Trapper John McIntyre sat up suddenly in his bed, instantly awake, and in the other bedroom, Ace Travers, who had spent the night with Horsey de la Chevaux, suddenly stiffened as he came awake, his eyes open wide, his keen reporter's ears and mind trying to identify the source of the explosion.

In the sitting room, the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, awoke as one man, Knight Commander of the Peace Henri Pierre Petitpied and Supreme Commander de la Chevaux drew their swords and faced the door with determination in their eyes.

Hawkeye, clutching a quart of Old White Stagg over his head with his right hand, opened the door with his left.

'Put those swords away!' the taller of the two callers said in a conversational tone. The weapons were immediately sheathed.

'I am looking for Dr. John Francis Xavier McIntyre,' the shorter man croaked.

'Dr. McIntyre,' Hawkeye croaked back, 'is not available at the moment. May I be of some assistance, gentlemen?'

'Who are you?' the shorter man asked.

'I am Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., sir. Your Excellency.'

'You'll do. Get yourself shaven and out of that uniform.'

'Yes, sir,' Hawkeye replied. 'Immediately, sirs. May I inquire where I am going?'

'The archbishop of New Orleans,' the taller man said, 'sends his respects and hopes that you will be able to spare him a few minutes of your valuable time.'

'I would be delighted,' Hawkeye said. 'Nothing could possibly give me greater pleasure.' He turned and headed toward the bedroom, grabbing Horsey's arm and dragging him along. 'What have you got me into now, you swamp rat?' he demanded.

Horsey shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

'His Eminence will receive you, too, Mr. de la Chevaux,' the shorter man croaked. 'He said he was sure we would find you sober.

'Never touch the stuff, Father,' Horsey said.

'That's good,' the shorter priest croaked, 'because that means we won't have to give you a bath to sober you up. I was told that was a distinct possibility.'

The shorter priest followed Horsey into the bedroom where he had spent the night. He saw Ace Travers.

'I must say that I'm surprised to find you in a place like this, Mr. Travers,' he said.

'All in the line of duty, Father,' Ace said. 'What's up?'

'Mr. de la Chevaux is going to see the archbishop,' the priest said. 'I'm afraid that's all I'm at liberty to say.'

'Can I go?' Ace said.

'I don't think that would be a good idea,' the priest said. 'It's a confidential matter.'

Ace Travers closed his eyes and went back to sleep as Horsey finished dressing.

The larger priest followed Hawkeye into the bedroom he had shared with Trapper.

'Are you a member of the Bayou Perdu Council?' the priest said to Trapper. 'You don't look familiar.'

'His name is Glockenheimer, Father,' Hawkeye said quickly. 'He's visiting from Milwaukee. He doesn't even know Dr. John Francis Xavier McIntyre.'

'That's right,' Trapper said. 'Pleased to make your acquaintance. Where are you taking this complete stranger to me?'

'He'll be returned to you in good time,' the priest said.

'In that case, I'll just go back to sleep,' Trapper said.

'If you happen to run into Archbishop Mulcahy, Mr. Glockenspiel—'

'I thought you said his name was Glockenheimer?' the priest challenged.

'Glocken*heimer*,' Hawkeye went on, a desperate tone in his voice. 'You will tell him, won't you, that I went off with this fine fellow?'

'I wouldn't advise that,' the priest said.

'I wouldn't think of bothering the archbishop,' Trapper said. 'I'm sure you're in good hands, Dr. Pierce.'

Three minutes later, Horsey Chevaux and Hawkeye Pierce were escorted through the lobby of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, a priest holding each by the elbow. They were put into the rear seat of the black Chevrolet, and then the priests got into the front. Hawkeye, after finding the rear door handles had been removed, desperately placed his face against the glass, hoping that someone would come to his assistance.

But there was nobody on the sidewalk in front of the hotel except the doorman and a young woman, striding purposefully inside. Hawkeye regarded her with deep interest and then was ashamed of himself. An expectant father, en route to see an archbishop, should not be, as he had been, rating the gluteal and the mammiform protuberances of a young woman on a scale of one-to-ten and awarding her nine and a half.

Hawkeye, of course, had no way of knowing that the young woman, who was Ms. Prudence MacDonald, was an acquaintance of a new acquaintance of his.

Ms. MacDonald was, despite her outward appearance of all-around health and fecundity, actually experiencing what psychiatrists call, in their quaint cant, a severe emotional trauma brought on by an awareness of inadequacy. Her emotional disturbance had been brought on, of course by

Dr. Fetterizzini's remarkable color photography of certain post-vasectemological surgery phenomena; but the root of her problem was that she was suddenly faced with the realization that she had cracked under strain.

She had, in a sense, fled the battlefield under fire, taken to her heels, run – on the verge of screaming – to the safety of her apartment. She had taken a hot bath made herself a pot of tea liberally laced with tequila and spent the evening planning her counterattack. There had been no question whatever in her mind that Ace Travers had immediately run back to the city room of the *Picaroon-Statesman* to trumpet, in his inimitable male-chauvinist-pig way that Ms. Prudence MacDonald, president of the New Orleans Chapter of Female Equality in All Things, had run away from an assignment at the first sign of blood.

Finding a defense against these charges had been made more difficult by the truth that she had indeed fled from an assignment at the first sign of blood, or at least at the first color photographs of what a dripping blood vessel would do to certain portions of the male anatomy.

It had taken two pots of tea and most of a quart bottle of tequila before sleep, troubled sleep at that, had come, and she had been awake at first crack of dawn, lying in her bed, alternately cursing Ace Travers, Dr. Michaelangelo Fetterizzini and the male sexist society, when the paperboy had delivered, with a chilling thump, the morning edition of the *Picaroon-Statesman*.

It had taken her some time to gather the courage to go and pick up the paper. Ace Travers and Manny the Crum being the male chauvinist pigs they were, it was not outside the realm of possibility that her dereliction of duty would be reported with a five-column banner headline on page one. The possibilities ran through her mind:

WOMEN'S LIBBER CRACKS UNDER STRAIN.
PRUDENCE TURNS TAIL AND RUNS
MEDICAL FACTS STUN NEWS HEN.

But finally, deciding that the facts would eventually have to be faced, she stepped outside her apartment and picked up the paper. Without glancing at it, she carried it back into the apartment, laid it on the kitchen table and only then finally gathered the courage to look at it.

Her name was on the front page all right, but not in the way she expected.

Ace had covered for her. Ace had finished the assignment, taken the pictures with her camera and turned the film in without saying a word about her cowardice under fire.

Now she alternated between a gratitude which infuriated her, and a suspicion that he was making excuses for her, the great big strong man protecting the fragile feminine flower, which infuriated her even more.

Her confusion was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone. She let it ring several times, wondering if she had to answer it at all. Finally her sense of duty (*not*, she assured herself vehemently, her female curiosity) caused her to pick up the telephone.

'Miss Prudence MacDonald, please,' a female voice said.

'This is Ms. MacDonald,' Prudence replied icily.

'One moment, please, Miss MacDonald. Mr. Manfried Crumschnagle is calling.'

So the dirty rat had told Manny the Crum after all! The credit line on the front page was to protect the good name of the *Picaroon-Statesman* and nothing else.

'Hey, sweetie,' Manny the Crum said. 'Is Ace there?'

'If you are referring to Mr. Travers, Mr. Crumschnagle, what possible reason could there be for him being here at this time of the morning?'

'It's O.K., sweetie,' Manny said. 'Ace got a little plastered last week and told me he had it bad for you. Lemme talk to him, will you?'

'He's not here,' Prudence said, furiously.

'O.K. O.K. Have it your way. I thought you liberated broads had given up that maidenly modesty business. Let me put it this way: if by some wild coincidence, you should

happen to run into him, like him coming out of the bathroom or something, tell him to get his ass back to the Old Royal Maison New Orleans. There's one more member of the Great Reunion yet to be heard from, one Ace left out of the story.'

'I beg your pardon?'

'A doctor named Burns. His wife just called up to let me know that he was not only in Korea with Horsey and the archbishop and those two doctors, but was their commanding officer, and MacArthur's personal medical adviser as well. I don't know how Ace missed that, but no harm done. It'll give us a chance to run the story again. Incidentally, sweetie, those were some great shots you made. Anyway, talk to this guy and his wife and get his picture with the others if you can work it that way. And while you're there, go see this Reverend Dr. Cody. Get a picture of him with his savage and the blowgun. I just got another MUST RUN! from the publisher about him.'

The phone clicked off before Prudence could frame a reply. She stood there staring at the handset as if she had never seen one before.

Ace really had covered for her. And Ace had told Manny the Crum that he had it bad for her. It was not an altogether unpleasant thing to consider. As far as male chauvinist sexist pigs went, Ace really wasn't so bad. He had very nice dimples.

Prudence looked up Ace's telephone number in the book and dialed it. There was no answer. She was first annoyed and then concerned, and then she realized that she had just been presented with the opportunity to square things. She could get out of his debt by covering the assignment herself. If she did that, it would establish a certain tit-for-tat quality to their relationship.

She dressed quickly, found her spare camera and headed for the Old Royal Maison New Orleans.

Prudence arrived at the suite of Dr. and Mrs. Francis Burns shortly after Burns, somewhat shaken by the experience,

had returned to his rooms after his reunion with Hawkeye Pierce and Horsey de la Chevaux.

Fifteen minutes later, she emerged from the suite with the notes for what she felt was a good story. Ace, in his lovable, impetuous way, had missed one of the subtle but important details of the story. He had completely left out of the story the contribution made by then Major Francis Burns, Medical Corps, U.S. Army.

Burns had been touchingly modest, even reticent, in not wanting to discuss his role, but, under his wife's gentle prodding, had finally admitted that when Horsey Chevaux had been wounded he had been in Tokyo, called there by General MacArthur.

He had returned, Prudence learned, shortly after Horsey had been admitted to the hospital, and Horsey's critical condition had been brought immediately to attention. As a major (Doctors Pierce and McIntyre were lowly captains) and as chief surgeon, all serious medical problems were his responsibility.

It had been Major Frank Burns who had made the critical decision that Horsey's leg might possibly be saved, providing the highest skills and latest techniques were used in the surgery. As chief surgeon, naturally, he had been in charge of the operation. Furthermore, he had personally supervised the post-operative care of the patient, including all nursing and physical therapy.

Prudence left the interview with the feeling that if General MacArthur had become ill during Major Francis Burns's medical services to Horsey Chevaux, the General would have had to fend for himself.

Prudence ran the three blocks between the Old Royal Maison New Orleans and the *Picaroon Statesman*, and, while her film of Dr. and Mrs. Burns was being printed, sat down at Ace's desk in the city room and wrote the story.

Manny the Crum, having finished with an immense sense of accomplishment that day's crossword puzzle, raised his eyes from his desk and scowled around the city room, his

baleful eyes stopping when he saw Prudence hammering away at Ace's typewriter. He rose and moved through the city room with surprising grace for someone of his bulk and slipped up behind Prudence to read over her shoulder as she wrote.

'How come,' he suddenly demanded, 'that (a) you're writing that story, and (b) how come you're signing Ace's name to it? Is that bum off plastered somewhere again?'

'Not at all, Mr. Crumschnagle,' Prudence replied, thinking quickly. 'Mr. Travers asked me to come in here and type up while he is searching other facts on this story and scheduling our interview with Reverend Cody. He said he knew how anxious you were to get the new, full story.'

Before bellowing in Prudence's ear, Manny the Crum had read the story in her typewriter. It was just what he wanted. General MacArthur and Horsey Chevaux in one story were always good copy.

'O.K., sweetie,' Manny said, snatching the paper from the typewriter. 'I'll take it from here. You get back to the hotel and get me a picture of Reverend Cody and his savage.'

Prudence meekly complied. She was more than a little pleased with herself. Manny the Crum had bought her story, which meant that Ace could never again bring up the incident at the hotel. But just to play fair, just to make sure that she could not be accused of using sly, feminine tactics, she tried again to call Ace at his apartment from a pay phone in the lobby of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans. This time, when there was no answer, she smiled with satisfaction.

Then she rode up in the elevator, walked down the corridor and knocked with a sure, confident knock at the door of the Reverend Almsworth Cody, D.D.

She had to knock three times before there was any response from within, but finally the door opened.

'May I help you?' the Reverend Cody asked. He looked, Prudence instantly decided, as if he were suffering from a terrible hangover.

'Good morning, Reverend,' Prudence said. 'I am Ms. Pru-

dence MacDonald, staff newsperson of the New Orleans *Picaroon-Statesman.*'

'And what,' said the Reverend Cody with an obvious effort, 'may I do for you, my dear?'

'I'm here to take a picture of you and your savage,' Ms. MacDonald said. 'May I come in?'

'There's no one here but the Reverend Crumpett,' Reverend Cody said. 'But please come in.'

The Reverend Cody introduced Prudence to the Reverend Bosco J. Crumpett and then sat down. He grimaced.

'Are you all right, sir?' Prudence asked.

'As a matter of fact,' he said. 'I seem to have some intestinal disturbance.'

'Perhaps Nurse Wachauf could help,' the Reverend Crumpett said.

'I really hate to bother her,' the Reverend Cody said and then instantly changed his mind. 'But perhaps that might be a good idea. Perhaps she might be able to give me something. My stomach is really painful.'

The Reverend Crumpett picked up the telephone and asked the hotel operator to connect him with Nurse Margaret H. Wachauf.

Whatever was bothering the Reverend, Ms MacDonald thought, it wasn't what she had originally thought it was, a hangover.

'Excuse me,' the Reverend Crumpett said to the telephone, 'I asked to be connected with Mrs. Margaret H. Wachauf.' There was a pause. 'This is the Reverend Bosco J. Crumpett,' he said. 'May I ask who you are?' There was another pause. 'Well, Reverend Wilson, would it be possible for me to speak with Mrs. Wachauf?'

The Reverend Crumpett put his hand over the mouthpiece. 'Mrs. Wachauf is being counseled by the Reverend Buck Wilson,' he said. 'I wonder why she didn't come to one of us with her spiritual problems?' And then Hot Lips apparently came on the telephone, for Crumpett went on: 'Good morning, Mrs. Wachauf, this is Reverend Bosco Crumpett.

You remember me, of course? The thing is, I'm here with Reverend Dr. Cody, and he seems to be having some sort of stomach distress. He wondered if you could come by for a moment?' Still another pause. 'Thank you very much,' Crumpett said. 'We'll look forward to seeing you.'

He hung up the phone.

'Nurse Wachauf will be here shortly,' he said. 'I must have misunderstood her. She sounded like she said just as soon as she could get some clothes on. Probably a figure of speech.'

'No doubt,' Reverend Cody said. 'I just hope that she has something she can give me so that I'll be able to meet the finance committee.'

There came a knock at the door. Crumpett opened it to admit Margaret H. Wachauf. The Reverend Crumpett was touched by Nurse Wachauf's dedication to her profession. At the first cry for help, she had come immediately, even before getting dressed. It was the first time the Reverend Crumpett had seen a nightdress quite like the one Nurse Wachauf was wearing, so to speak, in the flesh. He had in fact, only seen something like it once before. During his research into corrupting literature and its effect on the Christian home, he had come across a picture of a very similar garment in a large folding photograph in *Playboy* magazine.

The Reverend Buck Wilson, coatless, in the process of trying to snap his clerical dickey in place, was on her heels. He was, the Reverend Crumpett noticed, not only shoeless, but, as they used to say at Biloxi Bible College, his elevator seemed stuck in the basement.

'You're ill, Almsworth?' Margaret H. Wachauf said. 'What's the matter?'

'Hey, buddy,' Ms. MacDonald said to the Reverend Wilson, 'close your fly.'

'I have a rather severe pain in my abdomen,' Reverend Cody replied and pointed to the general area. Margaret Houlihan Wachauf put her fingers on his forehead and then put her fingers on his pulse.

'You've got a fever,' Margaret said, now all nurse. 'And

I don't like your pulse. I think you should see a doctor. I'm sure that Dr. Pierce or Dr. McIntyre would be happy to have a look.'

'Is Dr. Pierce the man who started the touch football game in the lobby with that leprechaun sculpture?' Reverend Dr. Cody asked.

'Brother Cody,' Reverend Crumpett said, in what he thought of as his take-charge voice, 'if I may make a suggestion?'

'By all means,' Cody said.

'We're only a few minutes from the New Orleans Christian Mental and Physical Health Center. I happen to be on the NOCMAPHC board of directors. I'm sure they would be delighted to have a look at you.' When there was just the suggestion of hesitation, Crumpett added. 'And there would be no charge, of course.'

'I don't think—' Cody began, and Margaret Wachauf shut him off.

'I think that would be a very good idea,' she said firmly. 'Could you telephone, so they know to expect him?'

'That won't be necessary,' the Reverend Crumpett said. 'My car's outside, and we'll just go over there.'

'I'll get dressed and follow you,' Margaret said.

'I'm sure there's nothing to worry about, Margaret,' Cody said, barely able to suppress a groan. 'That won't be necessary.'

Crumpett took his arm and led him to the door. 'I'll tell the staff to expect you, Nurse Wachauf,' he said. And then they were gone.

'Who are you?' Mrs. Wachauf asked Ms. MacDonald.

'What's wrong with him?' Ms. MacDonald, sniffing a story, countered.

'I don't really know,' Margaret said almost to herself. 'But I don't think that was just a hangover.' She picked up the telephone. 'Doctor Pierce's room, please,' she said. Prudence could hear the buzzing noise of the ring and then a deep voice answering the phone.

'*Ace Travers!*' Margaret Wachauf said in surprise. 'I was trying to get Dr. Pierce.' There was a pause. 'Yes, I'll settle for Dr. McIntyre.' That distinguished practitioner of the medical arts apparently came on the line. 'Trapper, can I come up to your room right now? I have to talk to you. Thanks.' She hung up.

'Excuse me, did you say "Ace Travers" a moment ago?' Prudence asked.

'Yes, I did. Do you know him?'

'Let us say we are professionally associated,' Prudence said. 'I'll just go with you, if you don't mind.' She added, 'And, just between us girls, if you're going to be in the same room with Ace, I would . . . uh . . put some clothes on.'

Margaret Houlihan Wachauf's nostrils flared, but she said nothing.

'I better get my shoes, too, sweetie,' the Reverend Buck Wilson said. 'I mean, Mrs. Wachauf.' He turned to Prudence. 'Being barefoot,' he said without much conviction, 'is an often essential part of psychological counseling.

The two of them set off down the corridor with Ms. Prudence MacDonald in hot pursuit.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

'Dispatcher to car Thirteen,' the radio said in the black Chevrolet sedan in the back seat in which Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., and Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, K of C, were riding.

The former linebacker for the Saints (temporal), now in the employ of the Saints (spiritual), took a microphone from its holder on the dash.

'Thirteen to dispatcher,' he wheezed. 'Go ahead.'

'What's your ten-four, Thirteen?'

'About to turn north onto Canal off Royal.

'Orders from the chief,' the radio crackled. 'Disregard previous instructions. Proceed directly to Gates of Heaven. Car One and the chief will rendezvous with you there. Estimated time of arrival ten o'-five hours.'

'Roger, dispatch. Car Thirteen proceeding directly to Gates of Heaven.'

'Odd,' Hawkeye mused. 'I sort of expected glowing fires and clouds of brimstone smoke.' He looked at Horsey. Horsey de la Chevaux was sitting rigidly erect, staring straight ahead, obviously deeply enmeshed in his own thoughts.

Hawkeye looked out the window.

Gates of Heaven was not what Hawkeye expected. The car turned off a major thoroughfare onto a narrow macadam road between towering, intertwining, moss laden oaks. At the end of the alley, he could see what looked like one of the sets from *Gone with the Wind*. There was an enormous, plantation-style building with three-story, white pillars. They passed a large sign:

GATES OF HEAVEN
Emergency Entrance, Next Left
All Deliveries in Rear

The Chevrolet sedan pulled up before the door of the plantation mansion and stopped behind a black Lincoln limousine. The limousine, Hawkeye noticed, had a short-wave radio antenna on the roof and a Louisiana license plate with an odd set of numbers and letters: HOLY—1.

The large Jesuit in the front passenger seat jumped out and opened the rear door.

'Right this way, gentlemen,' he croaked, and Horsey and Hawkeye got out.

They were led up a short flight of stairs between the towering pillars and into the building. A large plate glass door whooshed open mechanically as they approached it. Hawkeye saw a priest and a nun standing just inside the door. A moment later, he saw that the priest was the archbishop of New Orleans, now wearing a black business suit and

reversed collar instead of his ornate costume of the night before.

'Good morning, Dr. Pierce,' the archbishop said heartily, extending his hand. 'How nice of you to spare me a few minutes from your busy schedule.'

'Good morning, Your Eminence,' Hawkeye said.

'Hello, Horsey,' the archbishop said. 'How nice to see you, so fresh and clear-eyed, and, more importantly, *here* finally.'

Horsey looked embarrassed and said nothing.

'The Gates of Heaven would not have been possible, Dr. Pierce,' the archbishop said, 'without Horsey's generosity.'

'A little gift,' Horsey said, flushing with embarrasment.

'Totaling five point seven million dollars,' the archbishop said. 'And this is the first time that Horsey has seen what he's given the diocese.' He paused and then went on. 'Oh, excuse me. Dr. Pierce, Horsey, may I present the Reverend Mother Superior Bernadette of Lourdes?'

'Good morning, gentlemen,' Mother Superior Bernadette said, her hands folded at the waist of her ornate costume.

'I have a telephone call or two to make,' the archbishop said. 'And while I'm making them, mother superior would like to show you around the hospital. Would that be all right with you?'

'You're not going to tell everybody I give you a few bucks, Mother Superior?' Horsey asked.

'We have respected your wishes in the matter, Mr. de la Chevaux,' the mother superior said. 'We thought, however, that Dr. Pierce was an exception. As you yourself said, if it wasn't for Dr. Pierce you wouldn't be here, and if you weren't here, neither would Gates of Heaven.'

'How many beds, Mother Superior?' Hawkeye asked, both because he was a doctor and nosey about other people's activities in the body business and also to get Horsey off the hook.

'Two hundred and twenty,' the mother superior said, 'including a forty-bed thoracic wing. Would you come this way, please? We'll make a quick tour of the other facilities and

end up in the thoracic area. I understand that is your specialty.'

Hawkeye wondered how she knew that, but it wasn't the only thing that surprised him so he said nothing. He was impressed with the hospital, as much with its crisp cleanliness and all-around aura of efficiency as he was with its newness and the completeness of its facilities.

And when they stopped in a small NO ADMITTANCE STAFF ONLY room off the pathology laboratory for a cup of coffee and a doughnut, he knew that his first impression had been correct. He had never been in a bad hospital which served a good cup of coffee, and he had never been in a good hospital which didn't. The coffee here was superb, the doughnuts fresh and still warm. As importantly, the telephone in the room was in a soundproof shell. A doctor taking a call here could take it in private and not be forced to receive the unwanted advice of every other momentarily unoccupied physician in the room.

'You have quite a hospital here, Mother Superior,' Hawkeye said. 'Horsey, they spent your money well.'

'Well, if you can't trust an archbishop,' Horsey said, 'who can you trust?'

'How about a mother superior?' Mother Superior Bernadette of Lourdes asked.

'No offense,' Horsey said.

'Actually, Dr. Pierce,' the mother superior said, 'while I'm pleased, of course, that you like Gates of Heaven, I can't truthfully say I'm surprised.' She waited until Hawkeye looked at her, confusion in his eyes, and then went on. 'Izzy Margolis said you'd be jealous.'

'Izzy? You know Izzy?' Isadore Jacob Margolis, M.D., was the finest chest cutter west of Memphis and north of Chicago.

'We did our residency at John Hopkins together,' mother superior said. Then in response to the question on Hawkeye's face: 'Yes, it's doctor, too, but Mother Superior Bernadette of Lourdes is enough of a mouthful as it is.'

'When did you last see Izzy, Doctor Mother?' Hawkeye asked, obviously delighted. 'I won't call you Doctor Superior and if you're a brother . . . *sister* chest cutter, I really can't call you Mother Doctor either, can I?'

'I spoke with him on the telephone last night, as a matter of fact,' she said. 'And your name came up.'

'My name came up?' Hawkeye asked, puzzled.

'I talked to Izzy about a patient of ours,' mother superior said. 'I wanted his advice.'

'It comes no better,' Hawkeye said.

'We've got a sixty-two-year-old male with a large carcinoma of the left lung,' she said.

'What's the problem? You think it's inoperable?'

'We think it may be operable. There were no nodes at mediastinoscopy, but we can't get him on the table,' she said. 'He's a hardheaded old man.'

'Did you tell him he's about to become a dead old man?'

'How do you reply to "then God's will be done"?'

'Show him a week-old corpse,' Hawkeye said. 'How bad is he?'

'Well, he's sort of a transfer patient. He came with his records. He's ready for surgery, if he'd only agree.'

'You want me to leave?' Horsey asked. 'Private doctor talk?'

'Not at all, Mr. Chevaux,' Doctor Mother said. 'What we're talking about is a nice old man who's afraid to have an operation he needs very badly.'

'What happens if he doesn't have the operation?' Horsey asked.

'He'll croak,' Hawkeye said.

'What do you do to make it better?'

'Take out the lung, if the cancer hasn't grown beyond it.'

'That sounds like he's gotta chance,' Horsey said. 'Why won't the old man let you do it?'

'In fairness to . . . the old man . . . Horsey,' Doctor Mother

said, 'it's not quite as simple as Dr. Pierce makes it sound. It's a major operation.'

'Well, yes,' Hawkeye agreed, 'but so's a funeral. I can grab a lung with a lot less fuss.'

'All right,' she said, realizing that Hawkeye hadn't made the statement as a boast but rather as a simple statement of fact, 'and you may get the chance.'

'Would you like to see his X-rays?' asked Doctor Mother.

'If you'd like me to,' Hawkeye said.

'Izzy said you're one of the best chest surgeons north of Boston and east of the Mississippi,' Doctor Mother said. 'I'd be very grateful to you if you would.'

'Hawkeye's the best surgeon in the world, period,' Horsey said.

'Dr. Margolis didn't go quite that far,' Doctor Mother said.

'He's carried a grudge ever since I bribed a nurse to hand him a rubber-bladed scalpel,' Hawkeye said.

'You didn't!' Doctor Mother said.

'Yes, I did,' Hawkeye said with a delighted smile of memory, 'right there in front of God and twenty surgical residents. He just stood there raking at the patient's belly like he was spreading mustard on a hamburger.'

'How awful of you!' she said, quite unable to keep from smiling from ear to ear. 'I want you to see our operating rooms, too. We're quite proud of them. They're the best that Horsey's money could buy.'

Hawkeye hated to admit it, but the Gates of Heaven thoracic surgical suite was really an accomplishment.

Mother Superior Bernadette of Lourdes next led them into the office of the Gates of Heaven's radiologist, a dignified physician in his sixties who seemed to be expecting Hawkeye.

'Your reputation precedes you, Doctor,' the radiologist said.

'I hope I know what you mean,' Hawkeye replied. 'Your X-rays leave a little to the imagination, Doctor. I can see

everything but the brand of butts he caught it from.' He looked resigned and then asked, 'How's the rest of him? I guess you said he's in fair shape.'

'Yes.'

'How's his other lung?'

'Good, No emphysema. Blood gases a little off, but not bad.'

'Probably improve,' Hawkeye said, 'when that obstructed lung comes out.'

'What do you think, Dr. Pierce?' the archbishop asked. 'I confess that I want to know, too. I got you here to get your opinion.'

'I would never have guessed,' Hawkeye said wryly. 'You would have made a fine con man, Your Eminence.'

'Please, Doctor,' Doctor Mother said.

'One peek's worth a thousand guesses,' Hawkeye said. 'Personally I'd do an interior mediastinal exploration, and if that suggested operability I'd go right ahead. If he were my patient, I'd let him walk around in the sunshine this afternoon to get him in the right frame of mind. Then I'd admit him early this evening, and by tomorrow afternoon he'd have his lung out.'

'And how would you rate his chances?' Doctor Mother asked.

'If you've got an anaesthesiologist to match the equipment in that operating room, the surgery itself should be safe enough. Obviously, the big question is whether you can get it all out. Really, he has no choice. The alternative is a one-way ride to the marble orchard in the near future.'

'I'd like you to see the patient, Doctor, if you would,' Doctor Mother said.

'I don't see why that would be necessary,' Hawkeye said.

'Indulge me, please,' Doctor Mother said. She took Hawkeye's arm and led him out of the radiologist's office and down the corridor to a rather lavishly appointed private room, where Hawkeye and Horsey met the patient and two

nurses who were listening to stories of various Maryknoll missions.

'This is Dr. Pierce,' Doctor Mother said, and the nurses nodded respectfully at him.

Hawkeye walked to the bed and looked down at the patient.

'You ain't lost your stuff, Dago Red,' he said after a second. 'The moment I turn my back on you, you wind up in a motel room with two broads.'

And then Horsey was standing by the side of the bed. 'Wassamatter wit' you, Padre?' he said huskily. 'Why don't you tell us? Why we got to find out from Mother Doctor that you need Hawkeye?'

'I'm scared to death, Hawkeye,' the archbishop confided.

'What duh hell you scared for?' Horsey said. 'Hawkeye's gonna cut you open, take out your lung and sew you back up. You *know* he's the best surgeon in the world.'

James Patrick Mulcahy looked into the eyes of Benjamin Franklin Pierce.

'Will you do it, Hawkeye?' he asked.

'Is the pope a Catholic? You gotta promise not to sue me if I blow it. I haven't a license in this state.'

'If anybody cuts me, it has to be you,' Mulcahy said.

'The entire facilities of the Gates of Heaven are at your disposal, Dr. Pierce,' Doctor Mother said. 'Your Eminence, what that means is that as chief of staff of this hospital I have just granted Dr. Pierce permission to assist a Louisiana-licensed surgeon. And what that means is that I'm going to stand there and watch Dr. Pierce.'

'And she will also be watching Trapper John who will be assisting me, if that's all right with you.'

'That's fine with me, Hawkeye,' Mulcahy said.

'It is agreed all around, then, that Dago Red is now my patient?' Hawkeye asked. There were murmurs of assent. 'O.K., nurse,' Hawkeye said. 'Get him out of bed and dressed. He's been lying there long enough. This afternoon, we're all going to go out and sit on Horsey's porch in Bayou Perdu.'

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Margaret Houlihan Wachauf, R.N., now wearing a skirt and a sweater, walked quickly down the fifth-floor corridor of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans to suite 517. She was followed by the Reverend Buck Wilson, now wearing shoes and having his elevator in the proper, or attic, position, and by Ms. Prudence MacDonald, her notebook opened and her feminine defenses cocked and ready for the coming encounter with Ace Travers.

She knocked at the door, a purposeful rap, and pushed it open before waiting for a reply. She stepped into the room over the semi-prone form of Knight Commander of the Peace Petitpied, who was leaning against the wall taking medicinal sips from a bottle of Old White Stagg Blended Kentucky Bourbon. Buck and Prudence followed her.

'You're a little late, honey,' Knight Commander of the Peace Petitpied said. 'You should have come last night when we asked the bellboy.' Then he saw Prudence and the Reverend Wilson. 'I told the bellboy a couple of broads. I don't remember nothing 'bout telling him to send us a priest.'

'Trapper, are you sober?' Margaret demanded.

'A temporary relapse,' Trapper said, 'which I intend to correct just as soon as humanly possible.' He bent over to take Knight Petitpied's bottle of Old White Stagg. Hot Lips snatched it from him. 'You just got between me and my booze,' Trapper said. 'There better be a good reason, and your recent conversion by the Reverend Buckdoc here doesn't count as a good reason.'

Hot Lips took him by the arm and propelled him across the body-strewn sitting room of suite 517 and into one of the bedrooms. She pulled the door closed behind them and then saw that the bed held a man.

'Don't mind him,' Trapper said. 'That's ol' Ace Travers. He's having heart trouble.'

'Heart trouble?'

'His love for some lady journalist is unrequited,' Trapper explained.

'Are you sober enough to function as a physician?' Hot Lips demanded.

'Unfortunately, yes,' Trapper said. 'Every time I tried to grab the bottle, I wound up holding Lovesick's clammy hand.' Then he grew serious. 'What's up?'

'Reverend Cody's got severe abdominal pains,' she said. 'I think he may have appendicitis.'

'If it was anybody but you, Hot Lips,' Trapper said, 'I'd deliver the standard speech that nurses are supposed to take temperatures, not diagnose. You want me to have a look at him, is that it?'

'We just sent him to the hospital,' Hot Lips said.

'Well, that should solve the problem. What do you want from me?'

'He's a good man, Trapper,' Hot Lips said. 'I'm worried about him.'

'In other words, you're not too happy with the hospital. Why not?'

'It's run by the same outfit that runs Gick-Miss-Em,' she said.

'What the hell is Gick-Miss-Em?'

'The Green Inferno Christian Medical Missionary,' Hot Lips said.

'Religion and medicine usually don't mix,' he said. 'Is that your point?'

'If the doctors here are anything like the doctors at Gick-Miss-Em,' she said, 'I wouldn't want them to lance a boil.'

'How come?'

'No money,' she said. 'We get the doctors who can't even get jobs with drug companies,' she said. 'Generally one step ahead of the disciplinary committee where they practiced before.'

Hot Lips had just violated, blatantly, the nursing ethical code which requires all nurses to regard all doctors as undiscovered Listers, Salks and Cushings. Theirs not to judge, but simply to pass the instruments. But as he looked at Hot Lips, his mind's eye was full of memories of Major Margaret Houlihan 'assisting' in the operating suite of the 4077th MASH. She had functioned as an assistant surgeon more times than he liked to remember. There had been too many wounds and too few surgeons.

Magaret Houlihan Wachauf's medical knowledge and experience were undeniable. Without any effort at all, Trapper could call to mind a dozen duly licensed practitioners of the healing art whose knowledge and experience, much less wisdom, were vastly inferior to that of Margaret H. Wachauf, R.N.

'You were out with him last night,' she said. 'Doesn't that make you his friend? And couldn't you, as a friend, look in on him?'

'Let me get a clean shirt and a tie,' he said.

'Thank you, Trapper,' Hot Lips said.

'Who's sick?' Ace Travers asked sleepily from the bed.

'None of your damned business,' Trapper said.

Trapper John dressed very quickly and jerked the door open. Ms. Prudence MacDonald, who had been standing with her ear pressed to the door, stumbled into the room.

'Prudence!' Ace Travers said.

'Ace!' Prudence MacDonald said.

'Prudence!' Ace Travers said, sitting up in bed.

'Ace!' Prudence said, finding her footing and looking at him.

'Prudence!' Ace said.

'Ace!' Prudence replied.

'Prudence, are you all right?' Ace asked.

'Ace, are you all right?'

'I was so worried!' Prudence and Ace said together.

Prudence, moving with something less than maidenly timidity, walked to the bed as Ace rose out of it. They embraced.

'Oh, Prudence!'

'Oh, Ace!'

'Oh, Prudence,' Ace repeated tenderly, as Prudence melted into his arms.'

'Oh, Ace,' Prudence said softly, as she felt Ace's strong, protective arms around her.

'Oh, shit!' Ace said.

'Ace!' Prudence said, pushing him away.

'Where the hell did they go?' Ace said. He dashed through the door to the sitting room. The sitting room was still full of drunks, but Trapper and Hot Lips were nowhere in sight.

'Somebody's sick,' Ace said. 'And Trapper went to the hospital to save him from the local quacks. There's a story there, and we missed it.'

'I know who's sick,' Prudence said, just a trifle smugly. 'And I know where they're going.'

'Oh, Prudence, you're marvelous,' Ace said, rummaging around for a pencil and a piece of paper.

'We do make a good team, don't we?' Prudence said with delight.

Three minutes later, with Manny the Crum looking over his shoulder, a re-write man in the city room of the *Picaroon-Statesman* took the story over the phone: The Reverend C. Almsworth Cody, D.D., well-known Christian missionary to the heathen of Brazil's Green Inferno, was stricken with appendicitis in his hotel room. Dr. John Francis Xavier McIntyre, famous cardiovascular surgeon, who had once saved the leg and life of Louisiana industrialist and philanthropist Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, rushed to his aid at the request of Margaret H. Wachauf, R.N., who had been the surgical nurse when McIntyre had saved the leg and life of the well-known Catholic layman and Knight of Columbus.

Prudence snatched the telephone from Ace's hand.

'The by-line,' she said, 'is "by Prudence MacDonald and Ace Travers, *Picaroon-Statesman* newspersons." '

Ace fought back the temptation to snatch the phone back

from her. He had read somewhere that true love meant willingly giving up those things one held dear.

Trapper John and Hot Lips, now followed by Knight Commander of the Peace Petitpied, who clutched the handle of his sword in one hand and the neck of a bottle of Old White Stagg in the other, marched across the lobby of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans toward the door.

Knight Commander Petitpied wore a look of determination. He was going to carry out his orders from Supreme Grand Knight Commander de la Chevaux to the best of his ability. Just before leaving suite 517 with the archbishop of New Orleans' muscular minions, Horsey had thrust a thick wad of twenty-dollar bills into Petitpied's hands and said: 'Stick with Trapper John. Don't let him spend a dime and stomp anybody who gets in his way. Sometimes people don't understand him, the way he talks wit dat funny accent.'

Before settling onto the floor and reaching for a bottle of Old White Stagg, Knight Commander of the Peace Petitpied had put on his uniform. Now he was grateful for his planning ahead. Trapper John and the nurse with the big knockers had come rushing out of the bedroom as if the cops were after them, and he had barely been able to get to his feet in time to catch them at the elevator.

The doorman saw them coming. He swung open the glass door, put out his other hand, palm up, and politely inquired, 'Taxi, sir?'

'Please,' Trapper John said.

'Outta duh way, dummy,' Petitpied said. 'Excuse me, Doc, we got a bus just sitting here doing nuttin".'

There were no taxicabs in sight. Trapper allowed Hot Lips and himself to be ushered into what appeared to be a Greyhound bus someone had painted yellow. A driver dozed behind the wheel.

'Where we goin', Doc?' Petitpied asked.

'Hot Lips?' Trapper asked.

'The New Orleans Christian Mental and Physical Health Center,' Hot Lips recited from memory.

'Gotcha,' the bus driver said. 'Know the place well. Used to be Madame Eloise's Sporting House. Before the French Quarter Betterment Association got religion.'

'That must be the place,' Hot Lips said.

The mighty diesel burst into life, momentarily concealing the hotel doorman in a cloud of thick, blue, oily smoke. The driver flicked on the turn signal and touched the horn button. Eight precisely tuned air horns on the roof sounded 'Onward, Christian Soldiers,' and the bus moved off down Royal Street, scattering tourists, flower children and what looked to Trapper like four Tibetan monks out of its way.

Five minutes later, with another blast from its horns, official bus number two of the Bayou Perdu Council, Knights of Columbus, pulled up in front of what looked like a small hotel. A sign identified it as the N.O.C.M. & P.H.C. The door whooshed open, and Trapper John, Hot Lips and Knight Commander Petitpied descended. The latter caught his scabbard in the door.

'Hot damn!' he said angrily and then scurried after Hot Lips and Trapper into the building.

There was a reception window immediately inside, but it was unoccupied. Trapper looked around, saw a door that apparently led to the interior of the building and pushed it open.

Immediately inside the door was an office with a sign identifying it as that of the hospital administrator. A well-barbered gentleman, obviously that luminary, sat behind a desk. Trapper John, who was well known in hospital administration circles for his pronouncement at the Maine medical convention that he had yet to meet a hospital administrator who could find his tail with both hands, plunged farther into the NOCMAPHC in search of a ward boy or janitor who could reasonably be expected to know what was going on.

The hospital administrator leapt from his deeply upholstered chair and waddled into the corridor.

'May I help you?' he asked, after he'd run down the corri-

dor and jumped in front of Trapper as Trapper was about to push open a door lettered SURGERY.

'I'm Dr. McIntyre,' Trapper said. 'I wish to see the Reverend C. Almsworth Cody.'

'I am Ludwell H. Featherington, P.H.A., Doctor.' Featherington said.

'Public Housing Administration? Are we in the right place?'

'Professional Hospital Administrator,' Featherington said. 'May I inquire if your interest is personal or professional?'

'At the moment, let's just say that Reverend Cody is a friend of mine,' Trapper said.

'*Personal*, then,' Featherington said.

'Where do I find him?' Trapper demanded.

'You don't find him anywhere, I'm afraid,' Featherington said. 'Rev. Cody is being prepared for surgery.'

'What's wrong with him?' Trapper asked.

'I'm sorry, I'm not permitted to give out that information to unauthorized persons.'

'Who do I have to see to become authorized?' Trapper asked.

'The receptionist will give you a form to fill out,' Featherington said.

'There's nobody in the receptionist's office,' Trapper said.

'She's helping out in the operating room.'

'Where's the operating room?' Hot Lips asked.

'The operating suite is off-limits to everybody but Christian Mental professional staff,' Featherington said.

'I am Margaret Houlihan Wachauf,' Hot Lips said, 'chief nurse of Gick-Miss-Em. Where's the operating room?'

'Well,' Featherington said, feathering his lips, 'I suppose that *you* may go back. But the *doctor* here, and this . . . this *gentleman*, will have to wait in the reception lounge.'

'You want I should stomp this creep, Doc?' Knight Commander of the Peace Petitpied inquired.

'Go on back, Margaret,' Trapper said. 'I'm sure everything will be all right.'

Margaret Wachauf made her way to the surgical suite, not at all pleased that her prediction that the NOCMAPHC would bear every symptom of a third-rate medical facility had come true.

She found a small, closetlike room, obviously supposed to be the nurse's locker room, and the other side of it was the scrub room. There were two people scrubbing, a doctor and a nurse.

'Good morning,' the doctor said with a hopeful smile. 'Are you by any chance a nurse?'

'As a matter of fact, I am,' she said.

'Oh, good. Sometimes when you call the Registry, you just wait and wait.'

Hot Lips decided that this was not the time to make a public announcement of her real purpose.

'What have you got, Doctor?'

'An appendectomy,' he said. 'Nothing out of the ordinary, I hope. But I hate to go in with only one nurse to assist me. Have you had operating experience?'

'I'm a qualified surgical nurse,' Hot Lips said.

'Would you please scrub, then?' the doctor said.

Five minutes later, Hot Lips, in surgical greens, stepped up to the operating table. The Reverend Cody had been given a pre-operative hypodermic injection, but was awake.

'You look, your eyes look, like someone I know,' Cody said.

'It's Margaret Wachauf, Reverend,' Hot Lips said. 'I'm going to help with the operation.'

'Oh, that's nice,' he said. 'It's much nicer to be among friends.'

'You'll go to sleep now,' Margaret said. 'And when you wake up, the appendix will be gone, and you'll be back in shape in no time.'

'But I missed the finance committee meeting,' he said.

'You know the patient?' the doctor asked.

'I'm chief nurse at Gick-Miss-Em,' Margaret said.

'Then I'm very glad to have you. We'll proceed,' he said and then asked for the scalpel.

When this highly unusual command apparently baffled the scrub nurse, Hot Lips reached for the instrument tray and slapped the knife into the doctor's hand.

After watching his opening technique, she began to relax a little. He wasn't a great surgeon, but he was reasonably competent, and this was an appendectomy not a heart transplant.

The appendix was finally located. It looked perfectly normal to Hot Lips, and, after examining it for a moment the doctor said, 'How does that look to you? It looks perfectly normal to me.'

'It looks normal to me, Doctor,' Hot Lips agreed.

'Then it must be something else,' the doctor said. 'And that is not good news.'

He enlarged the rectus incision and felt around. Immediately, he discovered the real trouble, a cancer of the ascending colon, a few inches north of the appendix.

'Goddamn it!' the doctor said.

'Is it malignant, Doctor?' Hot Lips asked.

'There's no question about it, and it's too much for me. I am not trained to do bowel resections.'

'Will you please take it easy for a few minutes, Doctor?' Hot Lips said. 'I'll be right back.'

'Where are you going?'

'A very good surgeon is in the waiting room of this so-called hospital,' Hot Lips said, 'barred from the operating suite by your administrator.'

She didn't wait for a reply. She pushed open the swinging doors from the operating room with her back and then made her way through the scrub room to the corridor.

'Doctor McIntyre!' she shouted as loud as she could shout. 'Doctor McIntyre!'

The door to the waiting room and the door to the administrator's office opened. Knight Commander Petitpied and Mr. Ludwell H. Featherington, P.H.A., appeared simultaneously.

Then Trapper John squeezed his way into the corridor behind Petitpied.

'Will you please scrub, Doctor?' Hot Lips asked. 'We've got a carcinoma of the ascending colon.'

'Now, just one minute!' Hospital Administrator Featherington said. 'Just what's going on here?'

'It appears that your surgeon needs some help,' Trapper said.

'I have no intention of letting some stranger off the street just walk into my operating room,' Featherington said. 'That's just out of the question. Simply out of the question.'

The doctor appeared in the corridor and walked quickly to where Trapper was.

'I understand you're a surgeon, Doctor,' he said.

'Yeah,' Trapper said.

'I diagnosed appendicitis,' the doctor said. 'When I opened him up I found a carcinoma. If you're qualified to help me, I'd be very grateful.'

'Now, just one minute, Dr. Jergens!' the hospital administrator said. 'That's simply out of the question. I absolutely forbid this! Think of the legal complications!'

'Petitpied,' Trapper said, 'entertain this nice gentleman while I go back here for a while, will you?'

'Thank you Doctor,' Dr. Jergens said.

'Hey you,' Petitpied said, picking up Mr. Featherington by attaching his hamlike fist to Featherington's shirt and raising it, 'I no like the way you talk to my fren.'

'My name is McIntyre, Doctor,' Trapper said as they went down the corridor. 'My friends like Hot Lips here, call me Trapper John.'

He scrubbed quickly and entered the operating room.

'All we need Hot Lips,' he said, 'is Frank Burns panting and pawing the ground in post-op, and it would be like old times. I always wondered what happened to the Civil War equipment we threw away in Korea. Now I know.' He paused. 'I'm sorry Doctor. That was uncalled for.'

'No apologies necessary,' Dr. Jergens said. 'I'm as well aware of the limitations of this place as anybody.'

Trapper felt the mass in the colon. The liver was normal. No metastatic tumor. There were no enlarged nodes in the mesentery. The tumor was partly, but not completely, obstructing the bowel.

Trapper looked around the bush-league operating room and said, 'Well, Doctor, even at home I might fight this battle another day. Here I surely will. Let's close him up and get him out of this nursing home or whatever the hell it is.'

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A swamp buggy as the name suggests, is a vehicle intended for use in marshy areas. The tires, twenty-four inches wide and six feet in diameter with deeply cut treads, are mounted on a modified four-wheel-drive truck chassis. Technically, the tire tread provides a very low ground pressure so that a swamp buggy can successfully negotiate mud and marsh. Its size, moreover, provides sufficient buoyancy so that a swamp buggy floats; the deep serrations of the tire tread provides traction through the water, sort of a paddle-wheel effect.

The body of the truck, often painted bright yellow to aid recognition from the air, provides space for four people to sit, plus a small storage area (about the size of a pickup truck bed) behind the seats. A heavy framework of one-and-a-half-inch steel pipe is welded over the body of the truck to protect the passengers in case the vehicle turns over. The larger, more expensive buggies are powered by large diesel engines, generally not very well muffled, and are equipped with radio antennas for short-wave communication.

Of course they are not often seen out of the marshes and swamps, and seldom in large cities. Nevertheless, late that same afternoon, an enormous swamp buggy painted with alternating yellow and black stripes, radio antennas waving,

diesel engine roaring and emitting a cloud of blue smoke, turned off Canal Street in downtown New Orleans onto Royal Street and lumbered up before the Old Royal Maison New Orleans.

Obviously, the vehicle had been recently put to the purpose for which it was designed. It was thickly caked with still drying black Mississippi Delta mud, and so were its two passengers, one of whom was standing in the front seat, clutching a bottle of Old White Stag Blended Kentucky Bourbon in one hand, and working the valve of a large, deep, air horn with the other.

The driver applied the air brakes a moment too late. There was a whooshing sound as they were applied, followed a moment later by the sound of crunching metal, as the buggy, which bore the legend (just visible under a layer of mud) DE LA CHEVAUX PETROLEUM NUMBER SIX, started to crawl up the bumper and trunk of a new Cadillac limousine parked in front of the hotel.

'Ooops!' the driver said. He stood up on the driver's seat and removed a set of what appeared to be aviator's goggles from his face. Since the rest of his face was heavily splattered with black mud, he looked as if he were wearing a white mask over his eyes. The rest of his body was covered with a black rubber garment. The total effect was startling.

The doorman and two very large bellboys rushed to the curb. The man who had been sounding the air horn (one of the little fringe benefits which accrued to him as chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the Chevaux Oil Production & Development Company) climbed somewhat unsteadily down a ladder and stood on the sidewalk. He turned to look up at the vehicle and to take a string of eight very nice-looking trout which were lowered to him by the driver. The driver then descended the ladder.

'That's the finest car I have ever driven,' he announced. 'Thank you, Horsey.'

'If you like it, it's yours, Hawkeye,' Horsey de la Chevaux said.

'I think I'd have trouble getting it on the plane,' Hawkeye said. 'But thank you just the same.'

The doorman finally muttered his outrage.

'May I help you gentlemen?' he asked in icy tones practiced to perfection in twenty-five years of running off riffraff from first-class hotels.

Hawkeye took the string of trout from Horsey and handed them to the doorman.

'Yes, thank you,' he said. 'Please give these to the chef and tell him that Dr. McIntyre, Mr. de la Chevaux and I and our guests would like them, *almondine*, for dinner.'

Horsey reached in the chest pocket of his chin-high black rubber waders and extracted a thick, somewhat mud-encrusted wad of money. He peeled off a bill and handed it to one of the bellboys. 'There's a case of booze in the back,' he said. 'Run it up to 517, will ya?'

'I think a little something to cut the mud is in order, Horsey, don't you?' Hawkeye said and marched into the lobby of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, followed by Horsey, one bellboy carrying the string of fish and a second bellboy with a case of Old White Stagg balanced, safarilike, on his head.

Hawkeye and Horsey veered left into the lobby lounge so quickly that a white faced maître d'hôtel was thirty seconds too late to bar their way.

Trapper John and Dr. Henry Jergens were sitting at one of the small tables in the lobby lounge, a pitcher of Sazerac and a copy of the *Picaroon Statesman* in front of them.

'As I live and breathe,' Hawkeye said, 'if it isn't John Francis Xavier McIntyre, the internationally famous practitioner of surgery and jewelry smuggler, sitting here having some nice man read the newspaper to him.'

'Just for the record, Hawkeye,' Trapper John said, 'while you and Horsey were out getting plastered in some foul den of iniquity, Dr. Jergens and I were letting air into Reverend Cody's belly.'

'Great idea. Wonder why I didn't think of it.' He pulled

out a chair and with elaborate gestures seated Horsey at the table. 'Yes, thank you,' he said. 'We will join you.'

'I'm serious,' Trapper said. 'Where the hell have you been anyway?'

'We were at the Gates of Heaven – which isn't the most aptly named hospital I've ever encountered – where we got the Cook's tour. Then we were out fishing successfully in Bayou Perdu for trout with a friend of ours, out of whom tomorrow afternoon we're going to grab a left lung.'

'What friend?' Trapper asked.

'Dago Red,' Hawkeye said. 'And unfortunately, I kid you not.'

'Don't look so self righteous,' Trapper said. 'I wasn't kidding about the Reverend Cody either. He's got carcinoma of the ascending colon.'

'Holy Christ!' said Hawkeye, for lack of anything better.

'Dr. McIntyre was good enough to scrub when I needed some help,' Dr. Jergens said.

'I thought they had a law down here that keeps his kind from working in their hospitals,' Hawkeye said. 'Have you been chasing ambulances, Trapper?'

'We thought he had appendicitis,' Dr. Jergens said. 'And then when I opened him up, we found the cancer.'

'How did it turn out?' Hawkeye asked, and now he was quite serious.

'We closed him up. Gotta move him into a real hospital. Tell me about Dago Red.'

'He has carcinoma of the left lung. Remember the butts he used to smoke?'

'Yeah. You think it's operable?'

'Could be. Fair shot. Worth a try. You know the alternative. So I told him I'd do it and you'd help.'

Horsey de la Chevaux, who had been sitting quietly at the table draining the pitcher of Sazerac, now stood up.

'I better go and see what happened to the Knights. They sometimes get in trouble if I'm not around,' he said in explanation.

'We'll see you upstairs in just a few minutes, Horsey,' Trapper said.

The three doctors had, understandably, been reluctant to discuss the finer points of the surgical techniques practiced on the Reverend Cody, and which they would practice on Archbishop Mulcahy, in front of a layman. With Horsey gone, that reluctance went with him, and they spent the next fifteen minutes in professional consultation among themselves, their specific anatomical references and professional observations concerning cancerous lungs and bowels heard by no one but themselves and the thirty or forty people sitting at tables near theirs. When they finally called for the bill and prepared to leave, theirs was the only occupied table in that portion of the lobby lounge. There had also been a run on the ladies' and gentlemen's lounges of such magnitude that attendants in both had reported to the management the high probability that the hotel water supply, or the kitchen, or both, was contaminated with an especially potent bug of the upchucking strain.

Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., fully aware that if he telephoned the Spruce Harbor Medical Center for a maternity wing bulletin from his room that the background noises would convince, correctly, anyone who came to the phone that suite 517 was full of drunks, elected to place the telephone call from a house phone in the lobby.

While he spoke on the telephone (the message he received was 'Don't call us, we'll call you'), John Francis Xavier McIntyre, M.D., stopped at the newstand and purchased a copy of the late-afternoon edition of the *Picaroon-Statesman*. He got no further than the front page before he appeared to be stricken with hysterical convulsions. Holding the newspaper in one hand, clutching his stomach with the other, he staggered toward the house phones just as Hawkeye turned from making his call. He handed the newspaper to Hawkeye, whose look of concern and confusion was quickly replaced by a smile just as insane as he saw two stories.

A three-column headline in the first announced:

MacARTHUR'S PERSONAL PHYSICIAN IN NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION

Returned from Treating Five-Star General to Treat J.-P. de la Chevaux

by Prudence MacDonald and Ace Travers
Picaroon-Statesmen Newspersons

NEW ORLEANS – Still another chapter in the recently uncovered story of the surgical miracle worked on Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, prominent Louisiana industrialist, sportsman and philanthropist, during the Korean War came to light today. It was learned that Francis Burns, M.D., public affairs, vice-president of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society, was actually the guiding medical light for the surgical team which saved de la Chevaux's leg and probably his life.

Dr. Burns, who is in the Crescent City with the national convention of the TA & VD Society, was serving as personal physician to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur when Mr. de la Chevaux was wounded. According to his wife, he immediately flew to the bedside of the stricken hero to personally assume charge of the case. He was at the time chief surgeon of the 4077th MASH, the army hospital to which the critically injured Mr. de la Chevaux was rushed.

Dr. Burns, then a major in the Army Medical Corps, arrived at a time when other physicians, lacking both experience and necessary surgical facilities, were on the brink of despair about saving Mr. de la Chevaux's (then Sergeant Chevaux) life, much less his leg.

'We did what we could,' the tall, gray-templed physician modestly said, 'with what we had. It was the very least we could do. An experimental technique was our only chance, and we took it.'

Assisting Dr. Burns at this time were B. F. Pierce and

John McIntyre, then junior army surgeons but today fully-fledged members of the TA & VD Society. They are also in New Orleans at the convention.

Mrs. Burns also revealed that during his service as a fighting combat surgeon in Korea, Dr. Burns had also treated other senior officers, including Major General Moon Mullins. Dr. Burns said that military security regulations still prohibited him from discussing the precise nature of General Mullins' illness, but admitted that he had been in charge of treatment.

There was a fine, clear photograph of Francis Burns M.D., with his wife.

'Before you let your press notices go to your head, Hawkeye,' Trapper said, 'I think you should read the story that's all about me.' He pointed to the lower right-hand corner of the front page:

SURGICAL TEAM BACK IN ACTION
QUICK ACTION SAVES MISSIONARY'S LIFE

by Prudence MacDonald
Picaroon-Statesman Newsperson

NEW ORLEANS – Dr. John F. X. McIntyre and Margaret H. Wachauf, R.N., who learned emergency surgical techniques from combat surgeon Dr. Francis Burns, unexpectedly put those skills to use this afternoon in the Crescent City's New Orleans Christian Mental and Physical Health Center.

Nurse Wachauf, now chief nurse of the Green Inferno Christian Medical Missionary Hospital in San Marcos, Brazil, had come to New Orleans from Brazil with the Reverend Dr. C. Almsworth Cody, director of the mission. Dr. Cody was stricken with what appeared to be appendicitis and admitted to NOCMAPHC.

During surgery performed by Dr. Henry Jergens, he discovered not appendicitis, but a cancer of the large bowel. Removal of this was beyond Dr. Jergens' capability. At

the doctor's request, Nurse Wachauf contacted Dr McIntyre who rushed to the operating room. For the first time since Korea, when they had been part of a surgical team under the direction of Major Frank Burns, M.D., Doctor McIntyre and Nurse Wachauf worked together, successfully saving a human life.

The nature of the immediate surgery was such that Dr. Jergens felt it inadvisable to wait for Dr. Francis Burns, who was involved in a professional seminar at the Old Royal Maison New Orleans. When informed by the *Picaroon-Statesman* of the surgery performed by his protégé, Dr. McIntyre, Dr. Burns said 'he wasn't surprised.'

'A well trained surgeon is a lifesaver,' Dr. Burns theorized, modestly not mentioning that it was at his hands that Dr. McIntyre received the best of his training.

'I wish that hadn't happened,' Dr. Jergens said.

'You do?' Hawkeye said. 'Why? I haven't had such a challenge to my ingenuity and imagination since I wired Frank Burns and Hot Lips' little canvas love nest to the public address system at the 4077th MASH.'

'You don't understand how the New Orleans Christian Mental and Physical Health Center works,' Dr. Jergens said.

'What's a nice guy like you doing in a joint like that anyway, Doctor?' Trapper asked. 'Frank Burns, maybe, doing three tube clippings an hour. But from what I've seen of you, you're all right.'

'You don't want to hear my problems,' Dr. Jergens said.

'Why not?' Hawkeye said. 'That'll give me a chance to tell you about the gross incompetents practicing in the maternity ward of the Spruce Harbor Medical Center, driving expectant fathers to the funny farm.'

'I lost my wife seven years ago,' Jergens said. 'We never had any children. I used alcohol to get me over the hump. By the time I sobered up, I'd lost my practice and my reputation. The only place I could get a job was there. No respectable physician will work there. And, with the wages they

pay, no married man can afford to. It's the end of the road.'

'You looked sober, professional and competent to me in that operating room,' Trapper said. 'And you seem to be handling your booze pretty well now.'

'I put booze behind me three years ago,' Dr. Jergens said. 'I can handle it now.'

'Then why don't you go back to private practice?' Trapper asked.

'With something less than overwhelming modesty, I'm about the only competent physician on the staff of NOCMAPHC,' Jergens said. 'I just can't leave the patients to the other so-called, if duly licensed, physicians. I'm one of those oddballs who takes the Hippocratic oath seriously.'

'Well, what's the problem about the newspaper story?'

'Like any other institution aware of its failings, NOCMAPHC is sensitive to criticisms,' Dr. Jergens said. 'They won't like – what amounted to my public admission – that I had to call for outside help.'

'It's never bothered me to yell for help when I needed it,' Hawkeye said.

'That's the point,' Jergens said. 'That's the difference between you and the staff of NOCMAPHC.'

'I think without a hell of a lot of trouble, Doctor,' Hawkeye said, 'I can convince the chief of surgery at the Spruce Harbor Medical Center that we need a widely experienced general practitioner, who takes ol' Hippocrates seriously, to head up our emergency services.'

'The reason he says that, Doctor,' Trapper said quickly, 'is because he's chief of surgery.'

'Thank you very much, Doctor,' Jergens said. 'Both of you. But I'll stay here. Every once in a while, it all seems worthwhile. Like now, as a matter of fact. I flatter myself to think that because I was there, and knew I was over my head, that nice old missionary has a chance to get well.'

Hawkeye and Trapper John exchanged significant looks.

'What do you think, Hawkeye?' Trapper asked.

'I was just recalling some of the many profound things

I learned at the knee of that great healer and personal physician to General Douglas MacArthur, Frank 'Call-Me-Doctor' Burns.'

'Such as?'

'Anaesthetize first, then operate,' Hawkeye said, 'for one. But what I was really recalling were his profound philosophical observations. I remember two in particular. One was, "He who is lost, hesitates"; the other was, "The best defense is a good offense." '

'What exactly do you have in mind?'

Hawkeye picked up the house telephone. 'Operator,' he said. 'This is Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D. I am a physician and a surgeon. On the matter of the greatest medical importance, I must speak immediately with the head man of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society.'

'What's all that about? You trying to get a medical discount?'

'Trust me,' Hawkeye said.

The president of the TA & VD Society was summoned from an important meeting ('Swiss Bank Accounts: Can IRS *Really* Find Out?') to the telephone.

'Doctor, this is Dr. B. F. Pierce,' Hawkeye said. 'Perhaps you saw my name, connected with that of our distinguished Vice-President of Public Affairs Dr. Francis Burns in the newspaper?' The doctor apparently had seen the *Picaroon-Statesman*, for Hawkeye went on. 'I have been talking to Dr. McIntyre, who, as you probably know, is another protégé of our beloved Dr. Burns. And we thought that Dr. Burns should finally get full credit for all that he did in the army in Korea. What I hope you will permit us to do, Doctor, is speak at the final, formal farewell banquet. Just a few words, just enough to let the world know what they have in our Dr. Burns. I'm sure the press and television would love to know more about the man we used to so proudly call Our Benjo Face.'

He listened for a moment, nodding his head and smiling widely as the president of the TA & VD Society replied.

'Well, I'm glad you see it our way, Doctor, It's high time that good ol' Dr. Burns got what is so rightly coming to him. Just one thing, Doctor. Our Dr. Burns is a man of incredible modesty. I think that if he knew he was about to have his virtues extolled by Dr. McIntyre and myself he probably would simply steal away somewhere. So let's not tell him. Let it be our little surprise, just between you and me and Dr. McIntyre. Thank you so much, Doctor,' Hawkeye said. He hung up.

'You're not!' Trapper said.

'Oh, yes I am,' Hawkeye said. 'And you, Doctor, of course will be our guest,' Hawkeye said to Dr. Jergens.

Dr. Jergens smiled, but somewhat uneasily, as a herpetologist does when he puts his hands into an incubator and finds that the rattlesnakes have come out of their eggs sooner than he had expected.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Trapper John who happened to be closest to the telephone in suite 517 picked it up when it rang at half-past seven the next morning. Hawkeye had only moments before laid the instrument down after having learned that there was no news from the maternity wing of the Spruce Harbor Medical Center.

Hawkeye was sitting in an armchair with a cup of coffee, staring glumly at the television news over WOOM-TV ("The Voice of the Cradle of the Confederacy"). Compared to the previous morning, suite 517 looked respectable, even solemn. There were still half a dozen cases of Old White Stagg Blended Kentucky Bourbon in the room, but they were now stacked neatly against the wall. With the exception of Horsey de la Chevaux and Henri Pierre Petitpied, the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, was not in evidence.

Horsey Chevaux had dispatched the Knights back to Bay-

ou Perdu for clean uniforms. Tickets for the Knights to attend the final, formal, farewell banquet of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society had been obtained for them, and Horsey wanted to make sure their appearance would bring prestige to the occasion.

Henry Jergens, M.D., after an early morning visit to the Reverend C. Almsworth Cody in his room at the New Orleans Christian Mental and Physical Health Center, had recently arrived at the suite to report on Cody's condition and to have breakfast. While at NOCMAPHC, he had encountered Margaret H. Wachauf, R.N., who had been attending Reverend Cody, and the Reverend Buck Wilson, who had been waiting for Hot Lips, and brought them back with him.

Hawkeye had spoken on the telephone with Reverend Mother Superior Bernadette of Lourdes, M.D. Doctor Mother had told him that His Eminence John Patrick Mulcahy, archbishop of Swengchan, was resting comfortably under a mild tranquilizer and that Monsignor Pancho de Malaga y de Villa was with him. There had been a private celebration of the Mass in the archbishop's room, and all over the New Orleans Archdiocese that morning special prayers were being offered for the archbishop and his medical attendants.

Ms. Prudence MacDonald and Mr. Ace Travers, after spending some time with Hawkeye and Trapper the previous evening, had pleaded the press of journalistic duties and left the gathering. F. Traywicke Conyers, general manager of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, who had visited them during the evening in an effort to locate the Reverend Buck Wilson, had mentioned in conversation that Mr. Travers had engaged, at the standard journalist's discount, the bridal suite of the hotel for his Aunt Minnie, who had arrived unexpectedly and without luggage from Butte, Montana.

Mr. Conyers, who was delighted to hear of the attention the press – including radio and television – was going to pay to the farewell banquet of the TA & VD Society, promised to devote his personal attention to the coverage of the affair. He would, in fact, provide the hotel's $15,000 sheet-steel and

bulletproof glass lectern, complete with self-contained water supply, hydraulically operated speakers' platform and Never-Fail Speech Prompter, acquired for a scheduled, but later canceled, visit of the Vice-President of the United States. Conyers realized it would be a hell of a job to get that heavy monster out of the basement and into the Andrew Jackson Banquet Hall, but it would be worth it, because the front of it was emblazoned with the five-foot across coat of arms of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans Hotel, which would show up nicely on television screens.

'This is Dr. McIntyre,' Trapper John said on the telephone.

Hawkeye reluctantly diverted his attention from a rather graphic advertisement for the Fecundity Form 'Upward & Outward' Brassiere Company to Trapper, for there was something in the tone of Trapper's voice which suggested he was receiving a professional call.

'But isn't that Dr. Jergens' decision to make, Mr. Featherington?' Trapper said, and there was now something in Trapper's calm and polite tones which told Hawkeye that his pal was right on the edge of blowing up in a white fury.

Trapper next took the telephone from his ear and held it in front of him, looking at it. He shrugged his shoulders and thoughtfully laid the instrument back in its cradle.

'What's up?' Hawkeye asked.

'Well,' Trapper said, 'I have just been taken off Cody's case.'

'That's my decision to make!' Dr. Jergens said.

'Featherington had news for you, too, Doctor,' Trapper said. 'You're fired.'

'What for?' Hot Lips demanded angrily.

'And so are you, Hot Lips,' Trapper said. 'But no sweat. Frank Burns can probably find a place for you in his tube-snipping factory.'

'I can't believe Reverend Cody would do something like that!' Hot Lips said.

'Cody didn't,' Trapper said. 'Cody has apparently been sedated by one of the NOCMAPHC quacks. Featherington

found out that he had a brother in Oregon – next of kin – and he called him. You can't really blame the brother. The choice he was offered was between an unlicensed doctor – me – and a just-fired doctor – Jergens – and 'the regular staff' of what sounds on the telephone like a real hospital.'

'Go over that again, Trapper,' Hawkeye said.

'Featherington said that since Reverend Cody is not fully aware of his condition, or in a state to make an important decision by himself, Featherington felt it was his duty to consult his next of kin. The next of kin is a brother in Salem, Oregon. It is the brother's decision that Reverend Cody's best interests will be served by having him re-operated by the regular staff of NOCMAPHC rather than an itinerant sawbones not licensed to practice in Louisiana.'

'There's nobody else on the NOCMAPHC staff qualified to go back in there,' Jergens said.

'Get on the phone, Trapper,' Hawkeye said. 'We'll talk to the brother.'

Thirty minutes later, they all became reluctantly convinced that there was nobody named Cody in Salem, Oregon.

'Unless we can do something immediately,' Jergens said, 'they're going to re-operate on that man.'

'The only thing we can do is get him out of there,' Trapper said, 'which, come to think of it, is a splendid idea on general principles.'

'What are you going to do with him after you get him out of NOCMAPHC?' Jergens asked.

'Take him to Gates of Heaven,' Hawkeye said. 'That seems to be an appropriate place to take a missionary. Besides, from what you two told me last night about the surgical suite at that corpse factory and from what I saw yesterday at Gates of Heaven, Gates of Heaven is the place to open him up again.'

'They have a word for that,' Hot Lips said. 'They call it kidnapping.'

'And you would really put Gates of Heaven in a bad spot, Hawkeye,' Trapper said. 'Technically, we're not allowed to operate there either. Without specific permission.'

'O.K., so we let some semi-skilled butcher's apprentice open him up,' Hawkeye said. 'Suits me.'

'I'll take the responsibility for moving Reverend Cody,' Dr. Jergens said. 'I haven't been told that I've been taken off the case. And if I'm present at the operation, it will be legal for you to operate.'

'That only leaves one small problem,' Hawkeye said, 'getting him out of NOCMAPHC and into Gates of Heaven without letting Gates of Heaven know about it. And while I'm perfectly willing to lie in my teeth on any given subject to practically any chief of staff, the fact that Gates of Heaven's chief of staff is Mother Superior Bernadette inhibits me somewhat.'

'In the words of our distinguished leader, Major Frank 'call me-doctor' Burns,' Trapper said, 'it's time for a staff-meeting to handle this problem in a military manner.'

An hour later, 'Operation Snatch' was formalized, following the form of a military operations order, a technique with which both Trapper and Hawkeye were familiar. For some reason they never quite understood, they had been subjected to sixteen hours of formal instruction in military operations orders shortly after donning a uniform.

'I never thought I would say this,' Trapper said, 'but God bless the U.S. Army.'

OPERATION SNATCH

GENERAL STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

(a) Free non-ambulatory wounded from hands of enemy
(b) Infiltrate same into neutral territory

FRIENDLY FORCES:

Detachment, 4077th MASH (retired)
Detachment, 1st Psychological Warfare unit
Elements, Bayou Perdu Council, Knights of Columbus
Undercover Intelligence Agent (Dr. Jergens)

ENEMY FORCES:

New Orleans Christian Mental and Physical Health Center

NEUTRAL FORCES:

Rev. Mother Superior Bernadette of Lourdes (Short title: Doctor Mother)

PLAN OF ACTION:

(a) Create diversions at (1) NOCMAPHC perimeter; (2) Gates of Heaven

(b) Execute OPERATION SNATCH

ORDER OF BATTLE:

Commanding General, Diversionary Force "A": Knight Commander of the Peace Petitpied

Commander, Diversionary Force "B": Ace Travers

Commander, Transportation Element: Sgt. de la Chevaux

Commander, Strike Force "A": Dr. Pierce (Coordination with Undercover Intelligence Agent)

Commander, Strike Force "B": Dr. McIntyre

At 10:15 hours, which is to say precisely one hour later, the Commanding General, Diversionary Force 'A,' Knight Commander of the Peace Petitpied, at the wheel of Chevaux Oil Production & Development Company's swamp buggy number six, lurched to a halt in front of the New Orleans Christian Mental and Physical Health Center.

He entered the lobby, accompanied by six members of the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, clad in mufti, pinched the receptionist on the cheek and demanded to see Madame Eloise. Knight Commander Petitpied was the only member of the Diversionary Force "A" who knew that Madame Eloise's Sporting House was no longer open for business, and that her building had, in fact, been taken over by NOCMAPHC.

At 10:17 hours, while Ludwell H. Featherington, P.H.A., and a hastily summoned force of ward boys, physical therapists and two alleged members of the medical profession attempted to dissuade Mr. Petitpied and his fellows from the notion that just behind the swinging doors was the collection of doxies for which Madame Eloise's had long been known, a black hearse, bearing the legend WARLEY & WARLEY

FUNERAL CHAPEL, rolled up to the rear of NOCMAPHC, backed up to the swinging doors of the emergency entrance and stopped.

Horsey de la Chevaux, who was driving, and Dr. Jergens got out of the front seat. The rear door opened and three uniformed last-rites technicians, one of whom was Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., in disguise, got out. With professional elan, they unrolled a body cart from the rear of the hearse and followed Dr. Jergens into the NOCMAPHC building.

At zero hour, which is to say 10:15 hours, Dr. John Francis Xavier McIntyre and Margaret H. Wachauf, R.N. appeared at the office of Reverend Mother Superior Bernadette of Lourdes at Gates of Heaven Hospital and introduced themselves. Dr. McIntyre then asked of it would be possible for him to examine the operating suite and its facilities. He would be, he said, assisting Dr. Pierce in the surgical procedure to be performed upon His Eminence John Patrick Mulcahy.

Dr. McIntyre stated further that it was his standard practice to conduct a dry run when operating in a strange hospital; that he wished to have the entire surgical staff, and all the equipment, assembled in the operating room, scrubbed and ready to go. In that manner, and only in that manner, he said, could he actually determine if everything was as it should be.

Mother Superior Bernadette thought it was a little weird, but she went along with the request. Izzy Margolis had stated that in his professional judgment there were few if any surgeons superior in ability and knowledge to Dr. McIntyre. With that in mind and considering that the patient in question was a highly placed prelate of the church, indulging Dr. McIntyre's little idiosyncracy seemed to be quite in order.

It took, as Dr. Pierce had predicted it would, fifteen minutes to assemble the surgical team and all its equipment, to have the technicians and surgeons and nurses scrub and to have all the facilities ready to go.

At 10:25 hours, while the surgical team was being assembled, Diversionary Force "B" (Ace Travers and Ms. Prudence MacDonald) appeared at the Gates of Heaven registrar's office and identified themselves as staff newspersons of the *Picaroon-Statesman*.

'We wish,' Ace said, 'to interview and photograph the happy couple for the edification of our two hundred thirty thousand five hundred – three hundred fifty thousand one hundred on Sunday – readers.'

'What happy couple?' the registrar, Sister Bonaventure of Medici, asked with a warm smile.

'The archbishop of New Orleans and his bride, Mother Superior Bernadette,' Ms. MacDonald said. 'We understand they are honeymooning here in the fifth-floor suite normally reserved for monsignors and better recovering from a bout with the bottle.'

'I assure you,' Sister Bonaventure said, 'that we have no such accommodations. And as for the other *fantastic* story . . .'

'Fantastic? It was already on the 'Morning Show' on television,' Ace said. 'And it's all over the French Quarter.'

'We won't take too much of their time,' Prudence said. 'Just a couple of pictures of them holding hands. You know, the standard lovebirds routine.'

'Mother Superior Bernadette is at this minute in the operating suite!' Sister Bonaventure said.

'That's your story,' Ace replied with obvious disbelief in his tone.

'I'll go get her!' Sister Bonaventure said.

At 10:21 hours, three last Frites technicians of the Warley & Warley Funeral Chapel respectfully rolled the body cart, now bearing a sheet-draped corpse, through the swinging doors of NOCMAPHC and tenderly loaded it into their glistening business vehicle.

The door was closed. The driver and his passenger resumed their seats and the hearse rolled slowly out to the street. The street was now crowded with an assortment of vehicles, most

of them colored black and white and featuring flashing blue lights on their roof. They seemed to be engaged in a game of wrinkle fender with a large, mud splattered swamp buggy.

The driver of the hearse rolled down his window.

'Hey, wassa matter wit' you guys?' he bellowed. 'Ain't you got no respect?'

The belligerents, shamed, stopped in their tracks. The policemen took off their hats and held them over their breasts as the hearse rolled decorously down the street. As soon as it turned the corner and was out of sight, the battle resumed.

Inside the hearse, having divested himself of the last-rites-technician-uniform tunic, Dr. B. F. Pierce leaned over the cadaver and gently removed the sheet covering his face.

'Good morning, Reverend,' he said. 'How do you feel?'

'Am I on my way to the Pearly Gates?' Reverend Cody asked somewhat groggily.

'Will you settle for the Gates of Heaven?' Hawkeye asked.

'I had rather hoped to be allowed inside,' Reverend Cody said and then dozed off again.

At 10:35, as Mother Superior Bernadette of Lourdes, more angry than she had ever been before, was throwing open one door after another on the fifth floor of Gates of Heaven to demonstrate conclusively that none of the rooms held either a sobering-up monsignor or a honeymooning archbishop, the Warley & Warley hearse rolled up to the emergency entrance of Gates of Heaven.

Two nurses and the intern on duty came out as the rear door was opened.

'This is emergency,' the intern said. 'You pick up around the corner.'

'Somebody's going to catch hell about this,' Hawkeye said. 'The archbishop was supposed to be sent to surgery, not to Warley & Warley. Such a sloppy way to run a hospital! You should be ashamed!'

'The archbishop?' the intern asked.

'Actually,' Cody said, 'I'm the Reverend C. Almsworth Cody, D.D.'

'See? He's already had pre-operative medication.' Hawkeye said. 'He doesn't even know his own name.'

'I'd better call Mother Superior Bernadette,' the intern said.

'In a word, Doctor,' Hawkeye said, 'what mother superior doesn't know can't hurt you, right? Why don't you just call surgery and see if he's expected?'

At 10:42, three minutes ahead of schedule, the Reverend C. Almsworth Cody was hastily rolled into surgical suite one.

'Ladies and gentlemen, you will recall, of course,' Trapper John began, 'what Reverend Mother Superior Bernadette M.D., said about the entire staff and facilities of Gates of Heaven being at the disposal of Dr. Pierce and myself?'

There were murmurs of assent.

'That being understood,' Trapper said, 'I will now amend the diagnosis of the patient before us. In my judgment, he now seems to need his belly, not his chest, cracked. Hot Lips, hand me one of those little knives, of you don' mind.'

'*Scalpel*,' Hot Lips said, slapping it into his hand.

'I thought,' the anaesthesiologist said, 'that we were going to do a pneumonectomy?'

'That's the second feature,' Trapper said, 'starring Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D. First we have amateur hour, starring me and Hot Lips.'

Hawkeye, now scrubbing and in surgical greens, entered the operating room and took up a place across from Trapper John.

'I heard you were strange,' he said, 'but I never heard of looking for a lung through an abdominal incision.'

'Shows what you know, buddy!' Trapper said. 'How about a pair of pliers, Hot Lips?'

'*Forceps*,' Hot Lips said, slamming them into his hand with a vigor somewhat in excess of that expected from an experienced surgical nurse.

'If you do that again, sweetie,' Trapper said, 'I'll include

you in my speech to the tube snippers tonight.'

'That would put you in a very bad light with NOCMAP-HC,' Hawkeye said, 'and you know what that would mean. No more skinny-dipping in the baptismal pool.'

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

'Holy One to Dispatch,' the chauffeur of the black Lincoln limousine bearing His Eminence, the archbishop of New Orleans, said into his shortwave microphone.

'Go ahead, Holy One,' Dispatch replied.

'Holy One at Gates of Heaven at 12:40 hours. No estimate of our departure.'

'Roger. Dispatch understands Gates of Heven at 12:45. Report on leaving.'

The limousine pulled to a smooth halt in front of the hospital, and the archbishop leapt nimbly out of the rear seat, with Monsignor John Joseph Clancy on his heels.

The nun on duty in the corridor saw them coming. Her eyes grew wide, and she approached the archbishop wringing her hands, a look of deep concern on her face.

'Tell me it isn't so, Your Eminence!' she said.

'Tell you what isn't so?' the archbishop replied kindly.

'You haven't eloped with Mother Superior, have you? Tell me you haven't!'

For the first time in many years, the archbishop of New Orleans found that he was unable to frame a simple, comforting reply to an earnest entreaty from one of his ecclesiastical family.

Instead he strode down the polished corridor of the hospital without any reply at all. Then, over his shoulder, he said, 'Jack, write a note to Mother Superior.'

'Yes, Your Eminence?'

'Suggest that she check her supply of medicinal alcohol

and sacramental wine. If both are intact, suggest that she have the good Sister see a shrink.'

'Yes, Your Eminence.'

'Doctor,' Trapper John said, 'I think you're one first-class gas passer.'

'Thank you, Doctor,' the anaesthesiologist said. 'And let me return the compliment. That was a nice, neat, fast job.'

'Thanks,' Trapper said, 'now how long is it going to take to set this place up again for act two?'

'Hot Lips, do you want to go with the reverend to recovery?' Hawkeye asked. 'Or do you want to pass tools for Dago Red?'

'If it's all right with you, Doctor,' Hot Lips said, 'I'll assist here.'

'Doctor,' the circulating nurse said, 'may I ask who *this* patient is?'

'I thought you were supposed to heal the sick without regard to race, creed, color or political persuasion?' Hawkeye replied.

'But to which recovery room do we take him?'

'I'm sure,' Hawkeye said, 'that all the proper arrangements for Cardinal Cody have been made.'

'*Cardinal* Cody?' the circulating nurse asked.

'Cardinal Almsworth Cody,' Hawkeye replied. 'Known in Vatican circles as the pope's strong, right, North American hand.'

'Oh, yes, of course,' the circulating nurse said. 'I'll get him to recovery.'

'But come right back,' Hawkeye said. 'We're going to get Archbishop Mulcahy right now.' He looked at the others. 'Grab a cup of coffee, or whatever,' he said. 'And be prepared to start again in an hour. Trapper, will you stay here and make sure we're ready?'

'I may stay here forever,' Trapper said. 'I've never had a whole religion sore at me before. It's a little frightening.'

Hawkeye, with Hot Lips following him, walked out of the

operating room and down the corridor to Archbishop Mulcahy's room.

They found Mother Superior Bernadette and the archbishop of New Orleans with Archbishop Mulcahy.

'Ooops,' Hawkeye said, 'this must be the wrong room. We were looking for the lady who just had quadruplets. We wanted to tell her all about the Nifty-Jiffy Diaper Service.'

'Hello, Hawkeye,' Mulcahy said a little groggily.

'You just relax, Dago Red,' Hawkeye said. 'We'll have that lung out before you know it.' He gestured to the operating-room pushers standing outside the door. They came in and gently moved the archbishop onto a stretcher.

'Hot Lips will go with you,' Hawkeye said. 'Trapper's already in there, shooting craps with the gas passer. It's just like old times, Dago Red.'

'God go with you, John,' the archbishop of New Orleans said, crossing himself and then making the sign of the blessing. Mulcahy was wheeled out of the room.

'Aren't you going to scrub, Doctor?' Hawkeye said to Mother Superior Bernadette.

'Yes, of course,' she said and left the room.

The archbishop of New Orleans and Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., looked at one another over the bed just vacated by John Patrick Mulcahy.

'What do you think, Doctor?' the archbishop finally asked.

'I'll tell you what I told Dago Red more times than I like to remember,' Hawkeye said. 'Put your prayer machine in low gear for a long, hard pull.'

The door opened and the circulating nurse put her head in.

'Doctor, Cardinal Cody is in recovery room three. Sister Maria Regina – she's head of our gastro-intestinal ward – was free, and she's with him.'

'Thank you, Nurse,' Hawkeye said.

'Did she say *Cardinal* Cody?' the archbishop asked.

'I thought that's what she said,' Hawkeye said. 'Is he a friend of yours?'

'I left instructions,' the archbishop said somewhat piquedly, 'that I was to be notified whenever a prelate of the church was in Gates of Heaven.'

'I think she said recovery room three,' Hawkeye said.

'That's where I'll be, Doctor, if you need me,' the archbishop said firmly.

Hawkeye looked out the window for a minute before leaving the room. Then he paused by Mulcahy's bedside table. He picked up a well-worn, even battered, string of rosary beads lying on the table and looked at them for a moment. Then he gently replaced them and walked purposefully out of the room.

A nun was waiting for him in the corridor.

'Doctor Pierce? I'm Sister Rose of Lima. I'm in charge of the recovery rooms. I don't have any instructions for Cardinal Cody.'

'I understand there's a physician in attendance,' Hawkeye said. 'What's the problem?'

'Recovery room three was reserved for Archbishop Mulcahy,' the nun said. 'There is no other private recovery room available.'

'Why, then, put them both together,' Hawkeye said. 'They have a good deal in common.'

'I'll have another bed moved in right away,' she said.

Hawkeye walked back down the corridor to the operating suite.

About the only thing that cheered Hawkeye as he stood looking at Dago Red's bare and shaven chest, the only portion of him visible under the surgical sheeting, was that he was very much impressed with the surgical team Mother Superior Bernadette had gathered for the operation.

Spending money for equipment – and Horsey had apparently spent money as if it were soon going to be outlawed – was not enough to guarantee good surgery.

What was required was a knowledgeable *team*, each of its members knowing what he was to do and anticipating what

the surgeon was going to require. Hawkeye had been impressed with the functioning of the team as he had assisted Trapper John with Reverend Cody.

They had taken in stride not only the unexpected shift in patients, and a different procedure from that which they had been told to expect, but what he had long ago learned was the somewhat disconcerting effect his and Trapper's behavior had on surgical teams. The number one surgical nurse, whoever she was, had quickly and without comment given up that position to Hot Lips. The anaesthesiologist had really been on the ball.

First, Hawkeye did a bronchoscopy and saw the tumor obstructing the left bronchus. 'You gonna have room?' asked Trapper.

'I've got half an inch of bronchus to work with, if the goddamn thing isn't growing every which way outside the bronchus.'

Then Hawkeye removed the third costal cartilage, just to the left of the breastbone. First, he explored the anterior mediastinum, the area between the lungs where heart, esophagus and trachea live.

'No nodes,' he mumbled to Trapper. 'I'm gonna open the pleura.'

Watching him as he felt around through the small hole, Trapper and Hot Lips saw, first, consternation in Dr. Pierce's eyes, then a slight sigh of relief.

'What?' asked Trapper.

'Christly thing involves the pericardium, but I think the hilus is free. We're gonna give it a go.'

They undraped the archbishop, turned him onto his right side and proceeded with the long periscapular incision and opened the chest through the bed of the resected fifth rib.

The exciting time is when the chest is opened and the surgeon gets his hands in for a really good feel. Usually, one feel tells the tale. Either he can get the lung out or he can't. Occasionally, the decision has to be deferred until an attempt is made to dissect out the bronchus, the artery and the two

large veins which supply air and carry blood to and from the lung.

Hawkeye stood with his hand in the depth of the wound, obviously working at something with his thumb and forefinger. 'Hot dog!' he said. 'I'm around the mother.'

'What mother?' asked Doctor Mother, who was not accustomed to Hawkeye's peculiarities of speech.

'The mother bronchus. I think I can move the whole thing if I open the pericardium. I don't feel any nodes here either. Gimme the crank,' he ordered.

Nothing happened.

'C'mon, gimme the jeezely Pinocchio.'

Hot Lips had to intervene. 'I think he means the Finochietto, the rib spreader,' she explained to the confused scrub nurse.

With the chest wide open, Hawkeye and Trapper opened the pericardium, the sac which houses the heart, and felt around. Hawkeye, after a moment of palpation, said to Trapper, 'See what you think.'

Trapper felt around and said, 'Yeah. Go boy. You're gonna have to put a Satinsky right on the atrial wall. You'll never dissect out the veins individually.'

'Yeah.'

They applied the Satinsky clamp to the atrial wall. Then they got a heavy silk tie around the pulmonary artery just where the main artery divides. Hawkeye dissected the bronchus up to where the trachea divides and applied a stapling device which saves sewing it by hand. Then they went sort of snip, snip and Dago Red Mulcahy was left with one lung and the Satinsky, a vascular clamp, hanging precariously on the side of his heart.

'Gimme a three-zero decton,' Hawkeye grunted. 'Let's sew that before something bad happens.' Five minutes later, the sutures in place, Trapper gradually opened the clamp and quickly tightened it when blood spurted out.

'Gimme another decton,' said Hawkeye.

Three interrupted stitches were placed. This time when

Trapper opened the clamp there was just a dribble of blood which they easily stopped.

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. 'I believe we may have a winner. Let's stick a Foley up front to let the air out and close the mother.'

'He's an archbishop, Doctor,' Doctor Mother reminded him.

Afterward, over coffee, Doctor Mother said, 'Gentlemen, that only took you an hour and fifteen minutes. For us it's usually three to four hours.'

'Yeah, well, you bead jigglers always do it different. Up in Maine we wait till after the operation before we start drinking. Guess I'll go to recovery room three.'

'Very well, Doctor,' Doctor Mother said. 'But I think you'll find what you're looking for on the fifth floor.'

Monsignor Clancy was standing in the corridor outside recovery room three when Trapper and Hawkeye, still in surgical greens, walked up to it. He nodded politely.

'I think the archbishop of Swengchan will be himself in a week or two,' Hawkeye said. 'He's a tough old goat.' He pushed open the door to the recovery room. The archbishop of New Orleans, who had been sitting next to Reverend Cody's bed, got to his feet.

'He made it,' Hawkeye said. 'Thanks to a first-class hospital and operating-room team.'

'The prayer machine may have had a little to do with it,' the archbishop said. 'God knows, it's been working hard enough.'

'And how is . . . this . . . gentleman?' Trapper asked.

'There was no post-operative nausea, Doctor,' Sister Maria Regina, M.D., said. 'He regained consciousness some time ago. He's resting comfortably now.'

'Thank you, Doctor,' the archbishop said. 'And now, gentlemen, if you'll come with me, I have something to show you both.'

'I'll know where to find you, Doctor,' Sister Maria Regina said, 'if it is necessary.'

The archbishop took Hawkeye firmly by the arm. As they entered the corridor, Monsignor Clancy took Trapper's arm just as firmly. They were led to an elevator, carried to the fifth floor and propelled into the floor nurse's office.

'I brought you here for a couple of reasons, gentlemen,' the archbishop said. 'I wanted personally to squash a nasty rumor that this is where we sober up our monsignors.'

Hawkeye looked as innocent as he could under the circumstances.

'Neither does this floor serve as a honeymoon haven for our clergy,' the archbishop said. Hawkeye looked slightly ill. 'On the other hand, we do try to keep it fully supplied to take care of any eventuality.' He slid open a file cabinet drawer, taking from it a bottle of Courvoisier Cognac and several glasses.

'Dago Red made me promise I'd give you this,' the archbishop said. 'He said no matter how it went in there, he wanted you to have a snort on him.'

They had one round, and then another.

'I regret that I must leave you now,' the archbishop said, 'but Monsignor Clancy will remain with you. I understand that ... uh ... certain legal *problems* involving the ... uh ... *transfer* of the Reverend Cody ... uh ... may ... uh ... *arise*. I want you to know that the legal firm which represents the archdiocese, Cohen, Abromowitz, Finklestein and Goldberg, is completely at your disposal.'

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

At five minutes to nine the next evening, Sister Piety of Glockamora sedately wheeled down the shining corridors of Gates of Heaven a twenty-seven inch (diagonal measurement) color television set. She was expected, and the nun on duty in the corridor held the door open as she pushed the set inside suite 501, the VIP suite.

'Your Eminence,' Sister Piety of Glockamora said to the Reverend C. Almsworth Cody, D.D., who looked like an archbishop if she ever saw one.

Cody started to speak, but the gentleman across from him (resting like he was in a bed with the back cranked up) caught his eye and shook his head.

'I am Sister Piety of Glockamora. Each year, the archdiocese awards the football team of the Archdiocesan League which has suffered the most broken and/or seriously sprained limbs a prize. This year, the 'Fighting Furies' of Prince of Peace High School, for whom I have the honor to be offensive coach, won that honor. This twenty-seven-inch (diagonal measurement) color television set is the prize. My boys heard that Your Eminence was ill, and the archbishop told us there was a program he wanted you to watch, starting at nine. And well, here I am.'

'That's very kind of you and your boys,' Reverend Cody said.

Sister Piety looked over at His Eminence John Patrick Mulcahy, archbishop of Swengchan, and remembered her manners.

'The boys and I hope that you, Your Eminence, and this Protestant gentleman will enjoy the set.'

'I spoke with the archbishop just half an hour ago, Sister,' Mulcahy said. 'He said I was to be sure to watch a special program at nine.'

'Well, if the archbishop said it, Reverend,' Sister Piety said firmly, 'watch it we will.'

'And won't you watch it with us, Sister?' Mulcahy asked.

'You better believe it, buddy,' Sister Piety said. 'Excuse me; *Reverend.*'

She plugged in the set, saw that it was operating and effortlessly carried a two-hundred-pound armchair between the two beds.

The three sat there wordlessly studying the ceiling during a ninety-second message from the friendly folks at the Fecundity Form 'Upward & Outward' Brassiere Company,

and then there was what they call, in the television business, a musical bridge.

It was extracted from Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries,' and then an oozing voice enunciated:

'WOOM-TV, the voice of the cradle of the Confederacy, takes you now to the Grand Ballroom of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans for a special presentation of the Channel Fourteen news department. But, first, this word from the Internal Revenue Service. . . .'

'Beautiful picture,' Reverend Cody said.

'Delightful sound,' Archbishop Mulcahy agreed.

The man from IRS finished delivering his unveiled threat, and the picture changed to a long shot of the Grand Ballroom.

'Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,' an unctuous voice said. 'Live, from the Grand Ballroom of the Old Royal Maison New Orleans, Channel Fourteen brings you coverage of the final, formal farewell banquet of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society.'

'Archbishop, does that mean what I think it means?' Sister Piety asked.

'I'm afraid so,' Reverend Cody said.

'But this is the program the archbishop said he wanted us to watch,' Mulcahy said.

Sister Piety muttered something not quite intelligible.

'As you are probably aware, ladies and gentlemen, there has been a great deal of interest in the TA & VD Society's convention, following the revelation that the Korean War surgical team which saved the leg and the life of Louisiana's well-known industrialist, philanthropist and sportsman, Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, was reunited with him here in the Crescent City. Interest was heightened when Mr. de la Chevaux announced that he was endowing the Archbishop Mulcahy Surgical Hospital in honor of the chaplain who had ministered to him on the field of battle.'

Reverend Cody applauded.

'I suppose you learned that in Russia,' Sister Piety said forgivingly after a moment.

'And interest was heightened even further when it became known that Archbishop Mulcahy underwent major surgery at Gates of Heaven at the hands of the men who had once saved Mr. de la Chevaux's life.

'This and some other developments, including allegations of kidnapping a distinguished Protestant missionary, the Reverend Dr. C. Almsworth Cody, from a local hospital, have caused widespread interest in tonight's activities. Representatives of all the national media are here, and this program is being carried nationwide.

'The originally scheduled program has been drastically revised, and all that we know for sure is that Benjamin Franklin Pierce, the surgeon who today performed major surgery on Archbishop Mulcahy, will speak in tribute to Dr. Francis Burns.

'All of those involved, except, of course, Archbishop Mulcahy and Reverend Cody who are in Gates of Heaven Hospital, are here tonight.' The camera panned down the speakers' table. 'There, of course, easily recognizable in his Knights of Columbus uniform is Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Chevaux Company. The lady in the diamond tiara and the flamingo pink ball gown is Mrs. Chevaux. Beside her is the archbishop of New Orleans. Next is Margaret Houlihan Wachauf, R.N., who was the surgical nurse in Korea for Mr. de la Chevaux and for the surgery performed here today in New Orleans. It's been a busy day for Nurse Wachauf, too. She announced, just before we went on the air, her engagement to the Reverend Baxter "Buck" Wilson, well-known New Orleans clergyman who is, of course, sitting right beside her in the lavender dress shirt with all the lace.

'Beside Reverend Wilson, looking slightly ill – I hope there's nothing wrong with him – is Dr. Francis Burns, one-time personal physician to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur and chief surgeon of the 4077th MASH. The

lady sitting beside him, wiping his forehead with a napkin, is Mrs. Burns.

'And beside the distinguished surgeon and his wife is Dr. John Francis Xavier McIntyre and beside him, Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce, who will shortly deliver a eulogy to Dr. Burns.'

'I don't think I want to hear that,' Archbishop Mulcahy said.

'If the archbishop said he wants you to watch, Reverend,' Sister Piety said firmly, 'watch you will. Didn't anybody ever tell you "when with the Romans—" '

'I think you may enjoy it, John,' Reverend Cody said. 'There were some interesting developments before you came out of the anaesthesia.'

'That's what I'm afraid of,' Mulcahy said.

A short, plump gentleman in a County Cork green dinner jacket made his way to the center of the table. He disappeared behind the Old Royal Maison New Orleans' $15,000 Never-Fail Speech Prompter. In a moment, the dome of his head came into view, and he seemed to rise out of the floor.

'Distinguished guests,' he said. 'Fellow fellows of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society. Ladies and gentlemen. I am Dr. Michaelangelo Fetterizzini, standing in for our beloved Dr. Francis Burns who unfortunately seems to have temporarily lost his voice.'

The camera cut to Frank Burns, who looked weak and wan, and then back to Dr. Fetterizzini.

'Before we get to our featured speaker, and fellow fellow of TA & VDS, Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce, permit me to address a few words to my ... the other guys at the convention,' Fetterizzini said. 'Gentlemen, I am happy to inform you that the missing film of certain vasectomological and lipectemological procedures has been successfully ... negotiated ... for. It will not, as the rumor circulating had it, be shown on national television as an NBC White Paper.'

There was a visible and audible sigh of relief from the

assembled fellows of the American Tonsil, Adenoid and Vas Deferens Society.

'Similarly, your executive committee has successfully negotiated for the return of certain tape recordings made by that distinguished lady newsperson, Ms. Prudence MacDonald, at one of our professional seminars. Ms. MacDonald, are you here, pretty lady? Oh, yes, there you are, with your handsome and talented fiancé, Mr. Travers.'

The camera moved to show Prudence and Ace. Prudence, who had been holding Ace's hand, let go of it as she sprang to her feet. She clasped her hands together over her head, in the manner of Joe Louis, and acknowledged the applause from the audience.

'As I was saying, your executive committee, while acknowledging to Ms. MacDonald her unquestioned right to seek out the news wherever it is to be found and, indeed, complimenting her on her journalistic genius, has managed to convince Ms. MacDonald that broadcasting or publishing verbatim extracts of our – shall I say – little medical secrets would not be in the public interest.'

There was another equally visible and equally audible sigh of relief from the assembled fellows of the TA & VD Society.

'In other action,' Dr. Fetterizzini said, taking a deep breath, 'and in keeping with TA & VDS's long-standing program of community betterment, your executive committee, in emergency session just an hour or so, completed arrangements to purchase the New Orleans Christian Mental and Physical Health Center. The price, frankly, was a little stiff, and it will be necessary to assess our membership to pay for it. Our original figuring makes it out to about twenty-five dollars a job – excuse me – a *procedure*. Now, since the executive committee also agreed that it was our duty, in keeping with our patriotic duty to fight inflation, not to raise our fees, that will mean a little belt tightening. But, as we've always said, "Ask not what you can get from vasectomy, but what you can give." '

There were some groans from the fellows, but Fetterizzini ignored them.

'Unfortunately, I have been too pressed with other matters to have had the opportunity to examine the physical facilities of the NOCMAPHC,' Fetterizzini went on. 'But I am reliably informed by His Eminence, the archbishop of New Orleans, who certainly should know from his vast experience, that the building is entirely suited for domiciliary purposes.'

For some reason, that brought a peal of laughter from some people.

'Which, of course, makes it perfect for our purposes. From this day on, the building will be known as the 'Ms. Prudence MacDonald Memorial School of Nursing.' We have been very fortunate in securing the services of Dr. Henry Jergens to serve as medical director of the school, and Mrs. Margaret H. Wachauf has agreed to become supervisor of instruction. The school will operate in conjunction with Gates of Heaven Hospital. . . .'

Dr. Fetterizzini was suddenly interrupted by a bellboy who thrust a telephone at him.

'Get out of here, you moron,' he said somewhat testily. 'Can't you see I'm on national TV?'

'All I know, buddy, is that it's an urgent call from somebody named Spearchucker for somebody giving a speech to the tube snippers. That's you, ain't it?'

There was a disturbance, which the television camera barely caught, as Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce went to the speaker's lectern, scattering two waiters and a sound technician in his path. He grabbed the telephone.

'Spearchucker?' he said. And then he smiled from ear to ear. 'Six-pound boy, eh? Finest kind!'

'If you'll just be patient, Dr. Pierce,' Dr. Fetterizzini said, 'I'll introduce you properly in just a moment.'

'Well,' Hawkeye said, 'since I am here, let's just dispense with the introductions.' He adjusted the microphone about a foot over Dr. Fetterizzini's head. It didn't really matter, for Dr. Fetterizzini disappeared slowly downward.

'I have been asked here tonight to talk about my comrade, Dr. Frank Burns . . .' Hawkeye began. The camera cut to Dr. Burns. He was leaning back in his chair, his tie off, his collar open. His wife was fanning him with a napkin. 'Personal physician to General Douglas MacArthur and chief surgeon of the 4077th MASH,' Hawkeye went on. Dr. Burns groaned so loudly it was audible.

'Well, what can I say about that?' Hawkeye said. 'I ask you to look at him, ladies and gentlemen.' He gestured toward Burns, and the camera picked him up. 'There's a *doctor?*' Hawkeye said. 'Thank you for your kind attention.'

He left the podium then and, with Dr. John F. X. McIntyre on his heels, dashed through the lobby and out to the curb, where a yellow bus waited, diesel engine idling.

'The airport!' Hawkeye cried, and the bus drove off.

Inside the Grand Ballroom, the camera of WOOM-TV roved over the banqueters, picking up the more prominent and pausing briefly on F. Traywicke Conyers who stood silently weeping in a corner.

Ten minutes later, clearing its path with a mighty airhorn rendition of 'Onward, Christian Soldiers,' the yellow bus pulled through the gates of the New Orleans' Moissan Airport. But it didn't stop at the passenger terminal. It drove directly onto the runways, preceded by an airport vehicle with flashing yellow lights. It skidded to a halt beside a huge jet aircraft, marked CHEVAUX OIL PRODUCTION & DEVELOPMENT COMPANY.

'What's all this?' Hawkeye asked as Trapper rushed him up the steps.

As soon as they were inside, the doors closed and the engines started.

'Horsey knew you would want to get home in a hurry,' Trapper said. 'We won't have to change planes in Atlanta.'

'But an airplane this big?'

The plane began to roll immediately and, in a moment, the lights of New Orleans were fading beneath them.

'And he sent a little present for the kid, too,' Trapper

said, unstrapping himself. 'Beats a train set all to death. Of course, he won't be able to use it for a while, but in the meantime we can play with it.'

'What are you talking about?' Hawkeye asked.

Trapper pulled Hawkeye to his feet and led him out of the passenger compartment to the rear of the jet which was used for hauling cargo.

And there sat, clutching in its jaws the flashing blue light assembly from one of the police cars that morning, Chevaux Oil Production & Development Company's swamp buggy Number Six.

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